

**What We Talk About When We Talk About Trust:  
Nuclear Weapons in the Nixon and Reagan Administrations**

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## DECLARATION

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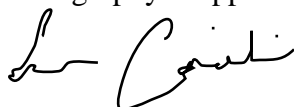
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis asks what it is that we are doing when we talk about trust in international politics. It begins by reviewing the recent and growing body of literature on trust and International Relations, locating this more nascent collection of literature within a wider, established body of social science work on trust in disciplines such as psychology, political science, business and management studies. It claims that an implicit but ubiquitous assumption about how words gain meaning underpins the literature, and that this assumption precedes and limits the range of possibilities for the form of the subsequent research. The thesis challenges this way of understanding by deploying Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. It then undertakes an alternative study of trust that acts as an ostensive challenge to the literature and thus shows by example how accepting different sites and processes of meaning can add to our understanding of words such as trust in International Relations. It accomplishes this through a 'grammatical investigation' of the uses of trust by President Richard M. Nixon and President Ronald Reagan regarding nuclear weapons and nuclear arms control with the Soviet Union. Using these examples, the thesis then suggests several alternative ways of talking about trust that would provide avenues for further research while avoiding the semantic and methodological difficulties of the dominant social science approaches. The contribution of this work is to challenge prevailing assumptions about words and meaning that exist within the literature and in so doing, to open up a path for alternative ways to talk about words like trust in International Relations.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
ALCM	Air-Launched Cruise Missile
ARPA	Advanced Research Projects Agency
CBMs	Confidence Building Measures
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPD	Committee on the Present Danger
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DDR&E	Director of Defense Research and Engineering
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DOD	Department of Defense
GAC	General Advisory Committee (on Arms Control and Disarmament)
GE	General Electric
GSS	General Social Survey
ICBM	Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MIRV	Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCA	National Command Authority
NES	National Election Studies
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSA	National Security Advisor (Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs)
NSC	National Security Council
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
NSDM	National Security Decision Memorandum
NSPG	National Security Planning Group
NSSM	National Security Study Memorandum
NST	Nuclear and Space Talks
NTM	National Technical Means
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
PD	Presidential Directive
PSAC	President's Science Advisory Committee
RNC	Republican National Committee
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SCC	Standing Consultative Commission
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SDIO	Strategic Defense Initiative Organization
SLBM	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly



## **Introduction**

In Raymond Carver's short story 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Love', two married couples sit around a kitchen table drinking gin and trying to explain the meaning of love. Terri, one of the wives, attempts to do this by describing her ex-boyfriend who loved her so much he tried to kill her and then killed himself. She asks, 'What do you do with love like that?' Terri's husband Mel is sceptical. 'My God, don't be silly' he says. 'That's not love, and you know it.' Mel, a cardiologist, says he can explain what real love is, or at least can 'give you a good example.' He then speaks of two of his patients, an elderly couple who had been horrifically injured in a car crash. The husband, bound head to toe in casts and bandages and immobile, is most depressed by his inability to turn his head and see his injured wife in the hospital bed next to his. This is how Mel describes love. The other couple are more recently married and say that they know what love is, though neither of them can articulate it. They try to explain love instead by demonstrating it; they touch knees, hold hands, blush and the conversation ends. At the end of the story they are all silent and sit with the empty bottles as the room grows dark.

The story is about the complexity of language, the difficulty in defining or expressing a complete meaning for a complicated word, and the different types of description we employ in the attempt. It is not about misunderstanding or truth, the two couples' ability to disagree about meaning rests on a level of mutual understanding, and no one's description of love is incorrect, but rather it illustrates the many different things we talk about when we talk about a word like love.

This thesis is about trust. Or perhaps it is better to say that this thesis is about what we talk about when we talk about trust.<sup>1</sup> Trust is a complicated word like love and how we talk about it is important because words such as trust come in and out of fashion as tools of understanding and are promoted as new ways to learn about the world and our discipline. This project examines why and how the topic of trust has been promoted as a theme for scholarship in International Relations, and asks what implications this has and, importantly, what it is that we are doing when we talk about trust.

The thesis begins by reviewing the recent and growing body of literature on trust and International Relations, locating this more nascent collection of literature within a wider, established body of social science work on trust in disciplines such as psychology, political science, business and management studies. It claims that an implicit but ubiquitous assumption about how words gain meaning underpins the literature, and that this assumption precedes and limits the range of possibilities for the form of the subsequent research.

How words get their meaning might seem like a somewhat tangential point to the study of trust in International Relations but this work argues that it is a centrally important consideration for any work that thinks about organising the world it examines according to a word such as trust. This is because there are certain assumptions about meaning that are necessary to enable the word ‘trust’ as a viable tool of analysis in international politics, such as the notion of a certain level of stability of meaning across time and space, as well as the idea that one can uncover a correct or true understanding of a word. The common way of talking about trust in the existing research is thus beginning with assumptions about meaning that become inbuilt into the types of questions it is possible to ask using the word.

While the present literature on trust in International Relations emerges from several different traditions – for example, game theory economic modelling, social psychology, sociology and literature on emotion and politics, this thesis contends that these disparate approaches are nonetheless all based on the same assumption about words and meaning. The thesis will categorise the trust literature into two main strands: the

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<sup>1</sup> By ‘we’ here I mean scholars of International Relations. Although this project also includes how politicians talk about trust as examples of alternative ways to describe trust in practice, the wider point is in reference to the study of International Relations.

rational choice approach, and work that criticises this method. Research that rejects the rational choice approach is generally founded on the same critique: that the rational choice account of trust equates trust and knowledge and thus trust remains unexplained and is often made redundant in these accounts. However, this thesis will argue that in all accounts of trust in the existing literature, both rational choice and its critics, there is a similar difficulty in explaining or understanding trust. Trust remains a *deus ex machina*, a force that changes social possibilities and enables or constrains action but that has not been fully explained.

The idea of the inscrutability of trust is not new to the literature; Chapter 1 will show how many of the authors who write about trust lament the challenges of explaining it and then propose new ways of understanding it. However, my project significantly differs from any of the preceding literature as I argue that this inscrutability is not a problem to be overcome, rather, this inability to ‘understand’ trust lies in the fact that the literature conceives of understanding in a specific and limiting way. The problem of trust is not that we have yet been unable to fully answer the questions that we ask; the problem is that the existing literature on trust in the social sciences is asking questions that are based on a particular vision of language and the world that has, so far, gone unchallenged.

### **The purpose of the thesis**

The contribution of this thesis is to challenge the dominant means of asking questions about trust and International Relations. It will demonstrate how the questions of the existing literature are predicated on a specific approach to trust which views it as an internal motivating source for social action. Trust (or the lack of trust) is conceptualised as an inner force that enables or constrains actors; it has universal characteristics and a universal or at least a generalisable social function that can be defined, understood and thereby operationalised.<sup>2</sup> The literature frames the understanding of trust in terms of

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Aaron M. Hoffman, *Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Andrew Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations during the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997); Brian Rathbun, ‘Before Hegemony: Generalised Trust and the Creation and Design of International Security Organizations,’ *International Organization* 65, no. 2 (2011): 243-273; Brian Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation: The Creation of International Security Institutions and the Domestic Politics of American*

finding the correct meaning for trust, the question it poses, either explicitly or implicitly, is ‘what is trust?’ To understand trust is therefore to gain insight into the ‘essence’ of a stable and uniform thing that a) exists in the world and b) is represented by the label ‘trust’.

This may seem like quite a sensible and obvious way to think about the subject.<sup>3</sup> If one wants to find out about trust one should ask ‘what is trust?’ It does not seem absurd to also claim that there should be a minimum foundation of meaning that all instances of trust share, that there are a set of common characteristics that are necessary to acquire the label trust. However, if one starts to unpack the assumptions contained in this view, it actually requires a specific approach to the philosophy of language to make it valid. This thesis will argue that the current way of talking about trust in the literature is not the natural or common sense way to talk about the subject but in fact rests on the adoption of a particular representational view of language where words represent things. In this view, words are labels that we attach to things that exist in reality, and learning a language is a matter of learning for what thing each word represents.

My thesis will challenge this by describing an alternative approach to language and by illustrating how taking this approach would enable different ways to talk about trust. It introduces the challenge to traditional theories of meaning put forward by Ludwig Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*. This is that ‘[f]or a *large* class of cases-- though not for all--in which we employ the word “meaning” it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language [emphasis in original].’<sup>4</sup> Words are not labels that represent things and that can be explained and defined in the abstract, they get their meaning through their use and in context. Understanding a word is not equal to interpreting what thing the word represents, but rather understanding how to use the word in the ‘form of life’ that is our language.<sup>5</sup> Understanding is therefore not an experience or a body of knowledge to acquire but a practice. Trying to acquire a universally correct

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*Multilateralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). The literature on trust and International Relations will be reviewed in full in Chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of the dominant view of meaning as a ‘sensible’ or common sense view has been previously discussed by Véronique Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), 43. References to the *Philosophical Investigations* in this work that include a number refer to the numbered paragraph in the text rather than to the page number.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

meaning of a word in abstract actually takes it away from the place where it gains meaning: its use.

This is important for approaches to the study of International Relations that begin by trying to understand a word such as trust because it changes the question about meaning from ‘what is trust?’ to ‘in what circumstances do we use the word trust?’ The contribution of this project is to show how the Wittgensteinian description of language as ‘part of an activity’ challenges the way in which trust has been discussed in the existing literature.<sup>6</sup> It does not argue that the current way is necessarily incorrect, but rather that an unacknowledged decision about meaning has been made that will necessarily limit the form of the subsequent research and the choice of method.

This thesis will show how the form of the research on trust will be pre-determined by this assumption so that trust scholars are actually beginning at a point where certain significant choices have already been made. It will also demonstrate how the assumptions about meaning lie in the language that we use to talk about trust. The idea, or to put it in Wittgensteinian terms, ‘picture’ of language as representation is so dominant because, as Wittgenstein claims, it resides in our language and ‘language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.’<sup>7</sup> The thesis will illustrate how the dominant ways of talking about trust are replicated and maintained by the repetition of the typical language and research questions that scholars use to explain it. It will highlight the importance of the words that we use when we talk about International Relations and show how certain assumptions about meaning are so persistent because they are located in our language.

The contribution of this work is to use Wittgenstein’s challenge of ‘meaning as use’ to unsettle the dominant and unquestioned representational view of meaning within the current literature, and in so doing to present the alternative possibilities this opens. This is relevant for the specific literature on trust and International Relations but the point also has implications for other bodies of work. Though this project is focused on how we talk about trust, there are other words that, to a greater or lesser extent, we use to organise and understand the world or as tools of categorisation and measurement. The use of these words also relies on specific ideas about definition and a type of understanding that can be challenged by the Wittgensteinian critique of this project. This thesis therefore also has a

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 115.



wider relevance for the form of our research questions and the limitations in our conceptual approaches to the study of International Relations more generally. Accepting the Wittgensteinian challenge to how we understand understanding allows us to recognise where the picture of language as representation lies in our language, and how that picture might shape how we talk about International Relations.

### **How this will be accomplished**

The thesis contains both a conceptual and empirical challenge to the current literature on trust. I use the *Philosophical Investigations* as a means of challenging existing descriptions of trust through the introduction of meaning as use to illuminate how the current literature rests on a way of conceptualising meaning that should not be taken for granted as the only possible option. I claim that a study of trust that does not rest on a representational view of meaning could ask different questions to those contained in the existing literature. The thesis will then undertake an alternative study of trust that will act as an ostensive challenge to the literature and will thus show by example how accepting different sites and processes of meaning can add to our understanding of trust in International Relations. This will be accomplished through a grammatical investigation of trust in two historical cases based on the Wittgensteinian notion of ‘grammar’.<sup>8</sup>

Wittgenstein describes grammar as expressing a word’s ‘essence’.<sup>9</sup> If the meaning of a word is in its use, grammar is the range of possible uses for a word and thus tells us what ‘kind of object’ something is.<sup>10</sup> A grammatical investigation thus examines the place of and use for trust in context and in relation to other words. It will ask how and why trust is being used; not ‘what is trust?’ but ‘what is meant by trust here?’ The point of the grammatical investigation is to stay on the surface of language. It rejects the possibility of a more true meaning for trust than what we mean when we say the word ‘trust’. Rather, the grammatical investigation accepts meaning as use and examines the use of the word in its place.

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<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein’s meaning for grammar here is not the system of how words fit together in a sentence (the set of rules for the correct structure of nouns, verbs etc.) but how words go together in different contexts to create meaning, the different potential uses for words in relation to each other. This will be explained further in Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 373.

To illustrate this point, the thesis will undertake a grammatical investigation of the use of trust by two US Cold War presidents regarding nuclear weapons. This investigation will not be based on the idea of meaning as representation but on meaning as use. Therefore the focus will not be on identifying characteristics of a pre-determined phenomenon that I have labelled as trust influencing or acting within the situation. It will instead examine the ordinary meaning given to the word 'trust' by actors within their specific background. This type of investigation must be historical or context bound and its purpose is not to generate any theories of trust that can be operationalised, instead it must take any insight into meaning from the specifics of the situation under investigation. This is what Wittgenstein expressed as the approach of 'look and see', and its purpose is one of description rather than explanation (in a covering-law sense).

The project will investigate the use of trust by President Richard M. Nixon and President Ronald Reagan regarding nuclear weapons and nuclear arms control with the Soviet Union. This research focuses on the United States and on the issue of nuclear weapons during the Cold War for several reasons. Firstly, much of the literature on trust in International Relations takes the Cold War as its case and tries to 'explain' certain action or lack of action through the idea of trust as a motivating factor.<sup>11</sup> Rather than accept the common narrative of trust or mistrust as having a role in the Cold War, this project takes the example given in much trust research and asks what taking a different approach can accomplish. Similarly, the issue of nuclear weapons is one that has been consistently framed in terms of trust, both by politicians and by scholars of International Relations.<sup>12</sup>

The Cold War and specifically the issue of nuclear weapons are also apposite topics for any research that takes language as its subject, particularly the language of

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<sup>11</sup> Examples include Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*; Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*; Deborah Welch Larson, 'Trust and Missed Opportunities in International Relations,' *Political Psychology* 18, no. 3 (1997): 701-734; Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'Investigating diplomatic transformations,' *International Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2013): 477-496.

<sup>12</sup> The most famous being Reagan's repeated 'trust but verify' with regard to the practice of arms control with the Soviet Union. See for example Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*; Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,' *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 69-85; Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'Decisions to Trust: Maintaining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime,' *RUSI Journal* 155, no. 2 (2010): 20-25; Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'Beyond Waltz's Nuclear World: More Trust May be Better,' *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (2009): 428-445.

‘trust’.<sup>13</sup> With the development of the hydrogen bomb and ICBMs in the 1950s, mass destruction – omnicide - became possible. Campbell Craig describes the consequences of a large scale Soviet missile attack on the United States in bleak terms,

the existence of the U.S. as a sovereign state and distinctive national society would come to an end. The chaos, anarchy, destruction, misery, and governmental collapse following a nuclear attack would have succeeded in eliminating American civilization as it is commonly regarded.<sup>14</sup>

This possibility fundamentally changes politics. It is, as Robert Jervis claims ‘a change that turns established truths about the relationship between force and statecraft on their heads.’<sup>15</sup> This means something that is quite unique and significant for the expression of trust in relation to governance, as citizens can no longer guarantee that their leaders can keep them safe because that is simply not possible. The language of trust is also connected to the language of deterrence as leaders must also trust in each other to adhere to the international conventions of nuclear ownership. Therefore any use of trust by political leaders will be shaped by the political imperatives of the nuclear revolution and reflect the limitations and contradictions of governing in a nuclear age. How leaders discuss the issue of trust and the international is also a means through which one can investigate the limitations and constraints of practicing foreign policy through describing these multiple, interconnecting levels of trust, examining how actors talked about trust and why and how it is being used as a means of explanation.

The project is centred solely on the United States for several reasons. Firstly, my research is focused on the use of language and conducting research on political speech across different countries or languages would make any attempt at comparison not only difficult but potentially misleading. Words do not simply translate across different languages and are not used in analogous ways, so a cross-language study would create

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<sup>13</sup> There is a significant body of work on Cold War rhetoric and nuclear weapons including Paul Chilton, ed., *Language and the Nuclear Arms Debate: Nukespeak Today* (London: F. Pinter, 1985); Carol Cohn, ‘Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,’ *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture* 12, no. 4 (1987): 687-718; Martin J. Medhurst and H.W. Brands, eds., *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History* (College Station Texas: A&M University Press, 2000); Martin J. Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander and Robert L. Scott, eds., *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997); David S. Meyer, ‘Framing National Security: Elite Public Discourse on Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War,’ *Political Communication* 12, no. 2 (1995): 173-192.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 15.

multiple practical and methodological pitfalls. I believe that a companion study of the use of language during these times within the Soviet Union or in other states could be a valuable piece of research but this lies outside the limits of my thesis. Secondly, the political structure and importance of domestic politics and political communication makes a study of the United States a particularly illustrative instance of the issues of language and communication under study in this project.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the length of the research and the allowed time would not allow for a detailed, multi-country archival study, the time spent in researching the empirical chapters would be cut to the detriment of the quality of information within.

Presidents Nixon and Reagan are the subjects for the historical study for many reasons also. It is important to note at this point that this project is not one that operates within the parameters of traditional social science methodology. In fact, it is the influence of science that Wittgenstein views as responsible for some of the more egregious assumptions of philosophy. Taking a Wittgensteinian approach is therefore deliberately not working within the boundaries of International Relations if framed as a social science. However, this does not mean that decisions can be made without grounds, and while I did not select my cases (in fact I have deliberately avoided calling them cases or case studies in order to reinforce the rejection of the International Relations as science label) with regard to conventions of 'typical', 'most similar' or 'most different', my choices were not without reason.

There are certain notable similarities to the two examples I chose that make for a useful comparison. Firstly, both were Cold War presidents and, as was mentioned above, it was important to keep within the Cold War period. Secondly, both were Republicans and therefore were able to speak of foreign policy and the Soviet Union in a different way to a Democratic president. Both were also known as firm anti-communists and hardliners with regards to the Soviet Union before taking office. Moreover, the two presidents are notable for undertaking major nuclear arms control efforts with the Soviet Union which resulted in

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<sup>16</sup> As Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall have stated, while international multi-country and archival histories have added much value to the study of the Cold War, the United States can nonetheless remain a significant subject for research itself as it was 'never, after 1945, merely one power among many.' I agree with Craig and Logevall that the 'extreme power imbalances' during the Cold War make detailed study of US political systems and the link between the international and domestic elements of decision-making worthwhile. Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.

landmark arms control treaties, and were then responsible for selling these treaties to the American public.

However there are also differences between the two examples, the two presidents' time in office occurred in differing domestic and international political environments. How they framed the world and how we would typically describe them now in terms of trust were also dissimilar. The dominant popular and academic view of Nixon is that he was untrusting and untrustworthy, whereas Reagan, at least in the United States and regardless of differences in political affiliation, is generally remembered as a trusting and trustworthy leader in the broad public imagination.<sup>17</sup>

Because of these useful similarities and differences, investigating these two examples of the use of trust provides distinctive insights into issues of meaning and context in international politics that will demonstrate and thus reinforce the broader point of the project. The thesis will show how the two presidents both talked about trust in very different terms with regard to nuclear weapons, and how they located their meanings for trust on different bases. President Nixon talked about trust with regard to domestic politics but did not speak about US relations with the Soviet Union in terms of trust and did not frame the ongoing Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) as a matter of trust. Nixon's grammar of trust included words such as 'knowledge', 'intelligence', 'facts', 'information' and 'judgement' and he used trust in an attempt to secure domestic consent for his policy choices regarding nuclear weapons.

President Reagan, in contrast, talked about trust as a uniquely American characteristic. Reagan's grammar of trust included words such as 'freedom', 'faith', 'people' and 'democracy'. His most repeated saying regarding trust was not the famous 'trust but verify', but rather 'trust the people', a phrase that he used often with reference to the American public.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to Nixon, Reagan talked about the ongoing Nuclear and

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<sup>17</sup> Recent polling shows Reagan's retrospective approval rating at 78%, second only to JFK's and more than double that of last placed Nixon's (31%), '*CNN Poll: JFK tops presidential rankings for last 50 years*,' 22 November, 2013. <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2013/11/22/cnn-poll-jfk-tops-presidential-rankings-for-last-50-years/> See also similar Gallup polling numbers: '*Americans Rate JFK as Top Modern President*.' <http://www.gallup.com/poll/165902/americans-rate-jfk-top-modern-president.aspx> Last accessed 4 April, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Reagan used the phrase 'trust but verify' sixteen times in speeches from 1986-1989. He used the phrase 'trust the people' twenty four times. The latter was also part of the Republican Party Platform in the 1988 presidential election. 'Republican Party Platform of 1988,' 16 August, 1988. Online by Gerhard Peters and

Space Talks (NST) with the Soviet Union, which would eventually result in the landmark Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), as a matter of trust. He spoke often of a link between trust and nuclear arms control and framed the international as a realm of trust and mistrust.

This thesis will illustrate how the two presidents' meanings for trust were bound up in their specific contexts. The two leaders operated in particular political environments, both domestically and internationally, and had distinct styles and methods of leadership and communication as well as particular political personalities. Their use of the word 'trust' was shaped by the contemporary political climate as well as the political culture of the US. Both leaders were also using the word 'trust' with regards to nuclear weapons and in an age of total nuclear vulnerability, which influenced their meaning for trust. This research will show how all these things influenced how they talked about trust in the context of nuclear weapons and will therefore argue that investigating a word like 'trust' in context can provide a more useful description of trust and international politics.

The purpose of this research is not to question or 'prove' if trust is a factor or plays a role in international politics. Whether growing trust enabled the process of détente in Nixon's first term or mistrust inhibited the SALT negotiations, or whether Reagan and Communist Party of the Soviet Union, (CPSU) General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev began to develop a trusting relationship in Reagan's second term are not the questions asked in this thesis. Indeed, this research queries the assumptions that underlie such questions and Chapter 1 will contend that they rest on some problematic assumptions about meaning. Instead of trying to get below the surface of language to access a deeper understanding of trust, this thesis takes the Wittgensteinian approach that what we are looking for is already in plain view when asking questions about meaning. It is not the concealed motivations of the individual that are under examination in this project but the context of their speech and the function of their language, the endeavour is therefore to '*command a clear view of the use of our words [emphasis in original]*'.<sup>19</sup>

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John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25846> [hereafter The American Presidency Project.] Last accessed 19 March, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 122. For a further discussion of this distinction see Karin M. Fierke, *Changing Games, Changing Strategies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 59-64.

### *Notes on the form of the thesis*

The empirical research in the historical chapters is based on extensive archival work at the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, California and, to a lesser extent, on research undertaken at the United States Library of Congress, Washington DC, the United States National Archives at College Park, Maryland and the National Archives of the Government of the United Kingdom at Kew. It also makes use of the public speeches and interviews given by the presidents collected in the *Public Papers of the Presidents* and the public statements from the Department of State that are contained in the *Department of State Bulletin*.<sup>20</sup> I have also used contemporary newspaper articles and memoirs of administration officials as well as secondary literature on the topics. To all these sources I have adopted the Wittgensteinian ‘look and see’ approach. Arriving at the archives, I had no predetermined narrative (for example that trust was/was not important to the process of nuclear arms control between the United States and the Soviet Union) or hypothesis to test (indeed the idea of hypothesis testing is counter to the nature of this investigation). Instead, I embarked on a systematic reading of the documents regarding nuclear arms programmes and arms control, as well as the documents regarding the public presentation and communication strategies for these policies, to assess if they talked about trust at all and if so, how.

The two historical narratives are therefore different in nature. Chapter 2, which examines President Nixon’s use for trust, is an account of a detailed process of political decision-making that focuses on a domestic audience. Chapter 3, which examines President Reagan’s use for trust, is a broader account of the domestic and international framing of arms control negotiations and nuclear weapons spending that relies more on an analysis of public speech. The chapter on President Nixon takes place over a shorter period of time (mainly 1969 to 1970) and is restricted to a much smaller issue: the domestic battle over the development of an Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) System during the first years of Nixon’s first term. The chapter on President Reagan, in contrast, encompasses all of Reagan’s second term (1985 to 1989) and includes both Reagan’s

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<sup>20</sup> *The Public Papers of the President* are available online at the American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/> Archived copies of *The Department of State Bulletin* are available online at <https://archive.org/details/USGovernmentDocuments>

domestic push for the administration's defence spending plans as well as both the domestic and the international dimensions of the ongoing arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union and the thawing of superpower relations that preceded the end of the Cold War. While this is a product of the approach to the archives taken in this research, I do not believe that it is a disadvantage but that it in fact reinforces the flexibility of the grammatical approach, something that will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The structure of the thesis is also perhaps not a typical one. The body of the thesis is made up of only four chapters, all of which are longer than a standard thesis chapter and three of which are significantly longer. This came about organically and, while unusual, is important for each part of the research to maintain a coherent narrative and progression of argument. Chapter 1 incorporates both the trust literature review and the Wittgensteinian challenge of 'meaning as use'. While splitting these two up may have made for two more manageable chapters, it also would have damaged the integrity of the claim. The chapter is not a critique of the current methods of studying trust followed by the suggestion of a Wittgensteinian alternative, the reading of the trust literature is deeply intertwined with the Wittgensteinian challenge and the two cannot be separated without creating a contrived and misleading distinction. Chapters 2 and 3 are also long but again, there is no point at which they could be split into smaller chapters while maintaining the coherence of the narrative and without the divide seeming artificial.

Chapters 2 and 3 are focused on examples of public presidential speech. It is therefore necessary to clarify what I mean when I talk of the 'president' or the 'White House' as speakers or actors. The 'president' as discussed in this research is not just the expressions or preferences of Richard Nixon or Ronald Reagan as individuals but as political symbols that include the army of speechwriters, counsellors and spokespeople who come together to express the 'voice' of the administration.<sup>21</sup> This 'voice' is not a homogenous one however but includes many divergent opinions. As Keith Shimko states, this is an issue of degree of difference and of perspective. For example, it is possible to

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<sup>21</sup> For a further discussion of the process of presidential speechwriting see Kathleen Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Robert Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts: Presidents and their Speechwriters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008); Craig Allen Smith and Kathy Smith, *The White House Speaks: Presidential Leadership as Persuasion* (Westport Connecticut: Praeger, 1994). For debate on the idea of the rhetorical presidency see Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987); Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1996).



view the Reagan administration as either ‘a bunch of hardliners whose differences were dwarfed by their similarities’ or in contrast as ‘a conglomeration of pragmatic and ideological hardliners whose difference were very important.’<sup>22</sup> However, within any bureaucracy there are of course differences of opinion and while this work treats the President and the White House as entities, it is with the recognition that this includes varying and sometimes contradictory opinions and policy preferences.

This project makes use of several different bodies of literature to make a central point about meaning and trust. The thesis includes literature on the study of trust across the social sciences, literature on Wittgenstein and the philosophy of language as well as the historical and International Relations literature on the Nixon and Reagan eras and US Cold War History. This includes a number of large and established bodies of dedicated work and this thesis cannot engage with any of them with the depth of a piece of committed, specialist research and is therefore perhaps doomed to disappoint an expert in any of these particular fields. However, the thesis brings all these disparate groups of literature together with a specific intent to create an approach to the topic of trust and International Relations that has not been attempted before. It is this synthesis of these distinct literatures that allows for a new perspective on the topic and challenges the conventional ways of talking about trust in the current literature.

Finally, unlike in much of the existing trust research, there is no distinction made here between words such ‘trust’, ‘mistrust’, ‘distrust’, or ‘trustworthiness’ as ways of talking about trust, unless the person who expresses trust makes such a distinction.<sup>23</sup> This is a necessary decision based on the approach to meaning taken in this research; I am making no knowledge claims about trust but rather examining those made by others. For example, if President Reagan declares ‘the Soviet Union needs to prove that it is trustworthy’, and this could be rephrased as ‘the Soviet Union needs to prove that it is worthy of trust’ without disruption, then I approach these as two variants of talking about

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<sup>22</sup> Keith L. Shimko, *Images and Arms Control* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 232.

<sup>23</sup> For example the current trust literature includes work on the difference between ‘trust’ and a ‘trusting relationship’, see Aaron M. Hoffman, ‘A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 3 (2002): 375-401; and between ‘trust’, ‘mistrust’ and ‘distrust’, see Patti Tamara Lenard, ‘Trust Your Compatriots, but Count Your Change: The Roles of Trust, Mistrust and Distrust in Democracy,’ *Political Studies* 56, no. 2 (2008): 312-332; Mark Saunders and Adrian Thornhill, ‘Trust and mistrust in organizations: An exploration using an organizational justice framework,’ *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 13, no. 4 (2004): 493-515. For a distinction between ‘trust’ and ‘trustworthiness’ see Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, ‘Political Trust and Trustworthiness,’ *Annual Review of Political Science* no. 3 (2000): 475-507.

trust. Similarly ‘I do not trust the Soviet Union’ and ‘I distrust the Soviet Union’ can be viewed as alternatives. By creating an analytical difference between ‘trust’ and ‘trustworthiness’ I would be imposing my distinctions and definitions on the research and that would be contra to the point of the project. Therefore I include variants of speech based on the word ‘trust’, but at all times the decision is based on how the word is being used in context.

## **Plan of the thesis**

Chapter 1 of the thesis contains a review of the existing literature on trust in International Relations and situates this work within the literature on trust in other social science disciplines. It contends that, as a whole, the social science approach to trust takes a particular direction that is based on internalising a specific way of thinking about meaning that goes unacknowledged and shapes the subsequent research. The chapter illustrates how the current way of talking about trust necessarily leads to the privileging of one’s definition of trust as somehow ‘true’ and universal. While I do not argue that definition is negative per se, the approach to meaning inherent in the existing work places a notional boundary of meaning around trust through definition and promotes this definition as a means of study in itself, leading to the hypostatisation of trust as something with universal characteristics that both ‘is’ and ‘does’. While instances of trust might share what Wittgenstein terms ‘family resemblances’, I argue that research based on the idea of unearthing the universal, hidden characteristics of a term will inevitably encounter certain semantic and methodological challenges.<sup>24</sup>

The chapter then asserts that by privileging a particular approach to understanding, authors are left with the need to ‘explain’ trust in a specific way. This leads to a series of common descriptive fallacies that are prevalent in the literature: false analogies, multiple typologies and negative description. The chapter will demonstrate how these fallacies are a function of the need for a generalisable definition that animates the social science method of studying trust, and that this need is predicated on the assumption of meaning as representation.

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<sup>24</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 67.

The chapter introduces the Wittgensteinian critique of the current literature and uses the *Philosophical Investigations* to contest the theory of meaning as representation. It claims that, if one accepts the challenge of ‘meaning as use’, then the way in which we talk about trust in International Relations can change. It then proposes a grammatical investigation of trust that will adopt this alternative way of thinking of meaning, a method of description based the Wittgensteinian concept of grammar and the ethos of ‘*look and see*’. Rather than explaining the meaning of trust, the chapter contends that the grammatical investigation will show how the word ‘trust’ is used in a particular context.

Chapter 2 is the first of the two historical chapters and contains a grammatical investigation of President Richard Nixon’s use of the word ‘trust’ in relation to the issue of nuclear weapons during his first term. It focuses on Nixon’s use of trust in the domestic political battle over the deployment of an ABM system during 1969 and 1970. President Nixon took office at a time when the United States was troubled and divided by issues such as civil rights, inflation and the Vietnam War. The previous Cold War foreign policy consensus was beginning to break down and Nixon was becoming increasingly challenged on foreign policy and military decision-making.<sup>25</sup> In this atmosphere, spending on a high profile strategic programme such as ABM came under unprecedented scrutiny, which was amplified by public criticism of the programme by prominent scientists who questioned the ABM’s technical feasibility and fitness for purpose.

During this period of domestic unrest, Nixon viewed the ABM as the first big challenge to his presidential authority and therefore placed great effort in passing the ABM deployment plan through Congress. After a public political battle in 1969 that damaged much of the programme’s credibility, the chapter will show how the administration turned to the use of trust to try and convince a sceptical public to support the ABM. Nixon began to talk about the ABM in terms of trust, asking the public to ‘trust the president’. He placed this request within the language of authority, knowledge and the prestige of the presidential office. Nixon related trust to his presidential prerogatives for autonomy in decision-making and made use of a meaning of trust that was a reflection of the contemporary political climate, US political culture and Nixon’s response to the

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<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon’s Vietnam War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1998); Richard A. Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* (Armonk New York: M.E. Sharp, 2005).

imperatives of conducting politics in a nuclear age. In an era of challenges to current authority figures, Nixon attempted to de-contextualise his request for trust by linking it back to an ideal of trusting in past leaders.

Chapter 3 investigates President Reagan's use of trust with regard to nuclear weapons during his second term in office (1985 to 1989). It will illustrate how, in contrast to Nixon, trust was a large part of Reagan's vocabulary. During his political career Reagan had developed a specific meaning for trust as a uniquely American trait. He related this trust to his deeply conservative values and bound it in speech with ideals of small government and American exceptionalism. The chapter will show how the particular public meaning for trust as used by President Reagan was a reflection of the current political climate, Reagan's role in US political culture and the often disingenuous character of foreign policy rhetoric in a nuclear era.

For reasons which the chapter will outline, Reagan did not engage with the Soviet Union on nuclear issues during his first term in office. However, during his second term he began to work with the new Soviet leader Gorbachev on matters of nuclear arms control that eventually led to two significant arms control treaties: the INF Treaty and START. The chapter will investigate how Reagan began to use the specific meaning for trust that he had employed domestically in his public speech in the international realm and regarding the superpower relationship. By talking about trust as an inherently American characteristic and framing the arms control process as a narrative of trust, Reagan was able to make use of trust as part of an attempt to achieve particular policy goals. These included the implementation of his strategic modernisation programme, his administration's policy of interim restraint regarding adherence to the non-ratified SALT II treaty, and the ongoing negotiations on nuclear arms control with the Soviet Union. This chapter will show how Reagan used trust in his public diplomacy efforts, most notably targeted at Western Europe, by portraying the Soviet Union as an inherently untrustworthy partner in arms control.

The two chapters demonstrate how Nixon's and Reagan's uses for trust were located within a wider context of meaning and show how looking at the meaning of trust in this way avoids the potential for dehistoricising the meaning of trust as the typical approach would unavoidably entail. This alternative approach instead provides a perspective from which to describe the particular meanings for trust in their place.

Chapter 4 brings the two historical chapters together and asks what can be learned by adopting the grammatical approach to investigating trust in international politics, as well as what consequences this may have for the study of trust and International Relations. It will accomplish this in two parts. Firstly, the chapter examines the differences in meaning for trust as used by Nixon and by Reagan and asks how we can understand trust as located within the context of the era and the speaker. It will argue that these differences in meaning demonstrate why one should try to understand how and why President Nixon and President Reagan were talking about trust, rather than imposing a generalised and a-historical definition for trust onto the situation. In doing so, the chapter presents a practical argument against the idea of an essence, or core meaning for trust that strengthens the conceptual argument outlined in Chapter 1.

The second part of the chapter then asks what this means for the broader study of trust in International Relations. It contends that, if the central assumption of the existing literature - that meaning is a process of representation and therefore trust has an essence that can be understood and operationalised - has been successfully challenged by this work, then the current methods of talking about trust in International Relations should be reconsidered. It argues that the grammatical approach actually allows for a wide range of possible ways of talking about trust that take meaning from the subject matter under investigation and are more self-reflexive and critical in their approach. Based on the findings of this research, the chapter suggests several ways of talking about trust in these particular examples that would provide avenues for further research in this area and that avoid the semantic and methodological difficulties of the dominant social science approaches.

This thesis does not put forward any theory of trust and indeed the perspective on meaning adopted here is antithetical to any such idea. I argue instead for a limit to what we should study with the tools we have at hand. However, I believe that this work will demonstrate that accepting the inability to gain a deeper understanding of a word such as 'trust' than that which is located in its use is not a limitation. Accepting the challenge to meaning proposed in this thesis is actually a release from the methodological imperatives of meaning as representation that dominate the trust literature. The point of this work is to challenge prevailing assumptions within the literature and in so doing, to open up a path for alternative ways to talk about words like 'trust' in International Relations.

## **‘Back to the rough ground!’ A grammatical approach to trust and International Relations**

*‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.’*

*‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’*

- Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

### **Introduction**

The idea of the importance of trust in International Relations has become a prominent one over recent years. There is a rapidly expanding body of literature on trust and International Relations, and trust has featured as a theme of many recent academic conferences and conference panels. Those who study trust argue that it is both important and, apart from some discussion of the perils of misplaced trust, generally a good thing.<sup>1</sup> However, if the manifest difficulties of its study articulated by these scholars is to be believed, trust, as Martin Hollis succinctly states, ‘works in practice but not in theory’.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will review the current literature on trust in the field of International Relations and the social sciences in general. It will argue that throughout the social sciences the study of trust is limited by an approach to the term which contains specific assumptions about how language and meaning function. These assumptions about language create several problematic tendencies that lead to unnecessary semantic problems, increase the complexity of any possible analysis and limit the effectiveness of the endeavour as a whole. The chapter will identify each of these counter-productive tendencies in the

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<sup>1</sup> For example Diego Gambetta, ‘Can We Trust Trust?’ in Diego Gambetta, ed., *Trust, Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); Deborah Welch Larson, ‘Distrust: Prudent if not always Wise,’ in Russell Hardin, ed., *Distrust* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Hollis, *Trust Within Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

literature before concluding that a more critical approach to the study of trust would be useful to help recognise and avoid the current issues. The chapter will then suggest an alternative way of talking about trust in the field of International Relations that avoids these semantic problems.

The chapter will propose a method of talking about trust that challenges the representational view of meaning implicit in the current trust literature. This approach questions the efficacy of studies of trust that are based on the assumption that a general definition and explanation for the term can provide a foundation for cross-case and cross-disciplinary study. It will advocate for an approach to meaning that regards it as located in a practice rather than in the knowledge of a set of words that correspond to and describe things in reality, and will ask what consequences this approach to meaning might have for the study of trust in International Relations.

The chapter will adopt the challenge to traditional theories of meaning and language proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*. This is that, in general, the meaning of a word is its use in everyday speech. Therefore, taking the word 'trust' out of the context in which it is used creates a set of difficulties that will limit the form of the questions that can be asked about it. This is the substance of the critique made by this review of the literature on trust within International Relations specifically and of the social sciences in general. By removing trust from the place in which it receives meaning, namely the context and intent of its use, the study of trust in its current form renders the word 'trust' less meaningful and therefore makes its study less efficient as well as limiting the possibility for alternative ways of addressing the topic.

The increased focus on trust in the International Relations literature neglects the fact that there is no such thing as the 'concept of trust' that exists outside of our conceptions of trust and our use of the word 'trust'. Research that relies on defining and explaining trust in some abstract and generalisable manner therefore rests on a problematic view of where the meaning of words resides. Current literature on trust and International Relations has a tendency to hypostatise its conception of trust and so often overlooks the fact that the reason why one studies a subject such as trust will influence one's conception of that term; that is, its meaning is shaped not only by how but also why the word is being

used.<sup>3</sup> If one is to use the word ‘trust’ as a tool of International Relations, it should be used with acknowledgement of the importance of intent in shaping meaning, recognition of the role of context in understanding language, and an acceptance of the limitations of definition and the dangers of hypostatisation inherent in the current form of study.

This will proceed in several parts, firstly the chapter provides a brief overview of the current literature on trust and International Relations and situates this within the broader range of work on trust in the social sciences that have preceded and influenced the International Relations literature. The chapter will then argue that the current scholarship rests on a particular view of meaning: that of words as representations. It will then show how the challenge to the representational view meaning within the *Philosophical Investigations* can shed light on the assumptions held in the existing trust literature. By doing this it will illustrate some of the methodological and semantic problems that are common in the literature. The chapter will conclude with the suggestion of a method of description based the Wittgensteinian notion of grammar and the ethos of ‘*look and see*’ that could contribute to a more critical approach to the use of words such as trust in the study of International Relations.<sup>4</sup>

### **A review of the literature on trust**

A common account of trust within the International Relations literature is that of trust as a rational choice. The rational choice school of trust scholarship portrays specific actors who are self-interested, rational agents. These actors make strategic decisions in particular, limited contexts of potential cooperation. These decisions can be influenced by managing preferences and outcomes that are external to the actor. Trust in this account is a cognitive notion and is generally discussed as the calculation that one party makes about another party being potentially trustworthy (i.e. cooperative) in a given situation. This school of

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<sup>3</sup> The idea of the ‘hypostatisation’ of trust is taken from Henry Staten, ‘Wittgenstein and the Intricate Evasions of ‘Is’’, *New Literary History* 19, no. 2, (1988): 281-300.

<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 90.



thought is represented by influential authors outside of International Relations such as Russell Hardin, and within International Relations by Andrew Kydd and Aaron Hoffman.<sup>5</sup>

Russell Hardin proposes a rationalist account of trust that he terms ‘encapsulated interest’.<sup>6</sup> He summarises this as ‘I trust you because I think it is in your interest to attend to my interests in the relevant manner.’<sup>7</sup> Hardin claims that this trust goes beyond the mere prediction of cooperation; the cooperation involved must result from a consideration of the trustor’s interests rather than merely a compatibility of interests between the two parties. In short, trust is the belief that one party has the other party’s interests at heart in a specific situation. He does not distinguish between the possible motivations for this encapsulated interest which could be anything from expecting material gains from the continuing relationship, egoistic concerns, altruism, loyalty or love. These motivations could all fit under the rubric of the trust as encapsulated interest. Hardin works under the assumption that people are motivated by self interest, and that trust is the rational expectation about the behaviour of the trusted actor whose interests, for whatever reason, include the trustor’s. This trust is always located in a specific context and so the phrase ‘I trust you’ always has the implicit addition of ‘to do x’ or ‘in circumstance y’. For Hardin, trust is not generalised or limitless in any relationship which is in part due to the fact that he places the idea of competency at the heart of his meaning for trust. Trust does not just involve the belief that another is willing to do something, but also that they have the capability to do so. Hardin also declares that trust is cognitive rather than behavioural. One may act on trust, but the action is not trust itself, rather evidence of that trust. In other words, trust does not require action. Therefore Hardin asserts that ‘the declarations “I believe you are trustworthy” and “I trust you” are equivalent.’<sup>8</sup>

Andrew Kydd discusses the role of trust and mistrust in International Relations, specifically examining their roles in the Cold War. While accepting a Hobbesian anarchy, he nonetheless claims that states with benign motivations can get along if trust is involved, and that trust can be built by observation and cooperation. He therefore advocates for a

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<sup>5</sup> Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Hoffman, *Building Trust*; Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*. See also Partha Dasgupta, ‘Trust as a Commodity,’ in Gambetta, ed., *Trust, Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*.

<sup>6</sup> Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 173.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 10.

‘better theoretical understanding of trust and cooperation in international relations.’<sup>9</sup> He defines trust as ‘a belief that the other side is trustworthy, that is, willing to reciprocate cooperation’.<sup>10</sup> So to trust someone as Kydd defines the concept is ‘to believe it relatively likely that they would prefer to reciprocate cooperation.’<sup>11</sup> Kydd develops a set of models that deal with trust to illustrate how the trusting preferences of the actors in specific situations and conditions have an influence on their ability to cooperate. He asserts that cooperation demands a certain amount of trust between states, and that they can indicate their willingness to cooperate through a process of costly signalling; making small but meaningful gestures to illustrate their potential trustworthiness.<sup>12</sup>

Aaron Hoffman argues for the importance of studying trusting relationships which he describes as the ‘behavioural manifestations’ of trust. He defines trust as ‘an attitude involving a willingness to place the fate of one’s interests under the control of others in a particular context.’<sup>13</sup> This willingness is founded on the belief that the potential trustee will protect one’s interests. Hoffman differentiates between relationships that consist purely of cooperation and relationships of trust by asserting that cooperative risk-taking behaviour does not necessarily imply trusting behaviour. Trusting relationships occur when actors ‘grant others discretion over their interests based on the belief that those interests will not be harmed.’<sup>14</sup> Trustors make predictions based on the estimation that their interests will be taken into account by the trustees. Hoffman admits that these predictions are subject to errors and misperceptions but that this can be improved by adding to the amount of information available.

Hoffman argues that it is institutions (through the creation of oversight mechanisms and restrictions on action) that cause trusting relationships to emerge between states. By creating or participating in these institutions, potential trustors and trustees are more certain that their trust will not be taken advantage of and that their decision to enter into a trusting relationship will not backfire. This approach explains Hoffman’s ‘trusting relationship’ as a relationship under such conditions that would make trust less risky. Hoffman’s conceptualisation of trust is focused on its relational manifestation and based

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<sup>9</sup> Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

on an institutional framework that makes the consequences of placing one's interests into the hands of another less uncertain. For Hoffman, trust is action and in his discussion of trust he is actually speaking of 'trusting' (by which he implies cooperative) behaviour. Trust is thus a calculative action based on prediction. Situational variables, such as the presence of institutions, increase or decrease the likelihood of its success and the trusting relationships can vary in their extent and intensity. As with Hardin and Kydd, trust is more context-dependent rather than actor-dependent.<sup>15</sup>

While Hardin and Kydd's definitions refer to beliefs about preferences rather than beliefs about predicted behaviour, Hoffman's rational choice account differs in his focus on trust as beliefs about future actions instead of beliefs about the other's intentions. Diego Gambetta also focuses on predicting behaviour rather than intentions. He maintains that 'when we say we trust someone or that someone is trustworthy, we implicitly mean that the probability that he will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to us is high enough for us to consider engaging in cooperation with him.'<sup>16</sup>

### *Alternatives to the rational choice approach*

This rational choice approach to trust has many critics. Their primary criticism is that by treating trust as a function of varying knowledge and incentives, rational choice theories of trust actually render obsolete what they attempt to explain.<sup>17</sup> For example, Jonathan Mercer asserts that '[e]mphasizing incentives as the basis for trust eliminates both the need for trust and the opportunity to trust'.<sup>18</sup> Mercer goes on to criticise the context-dependent nature of rational choice explanations, claiming that '[t]rust is a feeling toward someone, not toward an inanimate object or toward a situation...If observers attribute cooperation to the environment rather than the person, then trust cannot-and need not-develop.'<sup>19</sup> Mercer describes the cooperation that is used synonymously with trust in these explanations as actually incentive-based rather than trust-based behaviour. The central point that critics of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>16</sup> Gambetta, 'Can We Trust Trust?' in Gambetta, ed., *Trust, Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, 217.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Becker, 'Trust as Noncognitive Security about Motives,' *Ethics* 107, no. 1 (1996): 47.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology in International Politics,' *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 95.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

these approaches make is that rational choice explanations of trust are tautological in nature and thus offer an explanation of the concept that makes it superfluous to their argument. They argue that the rational choice account of trust is an incorrect one as it does not fully capture the nature of trust. However, later sections of the chapter will show that this criticism is itself located on the problematic implicit premise that there is a ‘true’ nature for trust that can be captured by definition, and that one definition can be more correct than another.

The second, related critique of this approach is that it reduces potential trustors to multiple, interchangeable rational egoists, assuming that all action is based on self-interest. This ignores the possibility of a more complex system of personal decision-making and the dispositional, emotional and interpersonal components of trust that authors such as Brian Rathbun, Deborah Larson and Jonathan Mercer argue are important.<sup>20</sup>

Rathbun proposes an alternative explanation of trust and cooperation in International Relations founded in social psychology research and based on Eric Uslaner's account of generalised trust. Uslaner contends that trust is important because it goes beyond a simple, strategic calculation and contains a moral dimension. He describes generalised trust as ‘a moral commandment to treat people *as if* they were trustworthy [emphasis in original].’<sup>21</sup> Uslaner argues that the strategic conception of trust as a tool to reduce the risks of collective action by providing information to actors is incomplete. He proposes a definition of trust that has ethical roots and is based on the belief that most people share the same moral values. He claims that this meaning for trust explains things that the strategic account cannot, for example widespread civic engagement.<sup>22</sup> He argues that while strategic trust might explain the continuance of a relationship it cannot explain its origins. If strategic trust is knowledge-based as rationalists claim, it could develop through repeated cooperation but Uslaner questions how this cooperation could be initiated without the knowledge required to begin the relationship. Uslaner suggests that

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<sup>20</sup> See for example Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*; Rathbun, ‘Before Hegemony’; Mercer, ‘Rationality and Psychology in International Politics.’

<sup>21</sup> Eric Uslaner, ‘The Moral Foundations of Trust,’ prepared for the symposium, *Trust in the Knowledge Society*, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, 20 September, 2002 and for presentation at Nuffield College, Oxford University, February 14, 2003. <http://www.gvpt.umd.edu/uslaner/uslanermoralfoundations.pdf> Last accessed 4 April, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Fukuyama proposes a similar idea of moralistic trust that arises ‘when a community shares a set of moral values in such a way as to create regular expectations of regular and honest behaviour.’ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Values and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 153.

this origin is based in what he terms ‘moralistic trust’, the belief that ‘*people ought to trust each other* [emphasis in original]’.<sup>23</sup> Strategic trust only explains cooperation with other actors about whom you have a certain level of knowledge, but moralistic trust allows for action without knowledge of each specific actor. He divides this notion of moralistic trust into categories of particularised and generalised trust. Particularised trust is limited to specific situations and members of an in-group, while generalised trust is stretched over a wider feeling of general trustworthiness and potential reciprocation from others. While particularised trust has a narrow focus, generalised trust is the belief that most people can be trusted.

Rathbun adopts Uslaner’s idea of a moralistic, generalised trust that is not based on interests and claims that the diffuse reciprocity that this conception of trust allows is a necessary component of multilateral cooperation in international politics. He argues against the rationalist focus on the situation in favour of a focus on the disposition and social orientation of the individual, which he believes has been neglected in previous work on the topic. He declares that

[f]or almost half a century, social psychologists have demonstrated (and international relations scholars have largely ignored) the importance for cooperation of what Uslaner calls generalized trust—the belief that others are largely trustworthy...Unlike strategic trust, which is a function of the structural situation, generalized trust is an attribute of individuals.<sup>24</sup>

Rathbun attempts to explain international cooperation and the development of international organisations with recourse to this notion of generalised trust.<sup>25</sup> He critiques what he sees as an assumption of the rational choice work on cooperation from Robert Keohane’s *After Hegemony*, and replicated since by Kydd and Hoffman with their more explicit focus on trust: that international institutions create trust by institutionalising cooperation.<sup>26</sup> Rathbun declares that the study of trust cannot rely on context-specific research because ‘individuals approach the same problems of cooperation differently. This is largely based on how and whether they trust others.’<sup>27</sup> Trusting is therefore a function of

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<sup>23</sup> Uslaner, ‘Moral Foundations of Trust,’ 6.

<sup>24</sup> Rathbun, ‘Before Hegemony,’ 244.

<sup>25</sup> Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*.

<sup>26</sup> Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, xviii. See Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). Also Hoffman, *Building Trust*; Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust*.

<sup>27</sup> Brian Rathbun, ‘It takes all types: social psychology, trust, and the international relations paradigm in our minds,’ *International Theory* 1, no. 3 (2009): 348.

disposition rather than merely of incentives or structural factors. Rathbun argues that these dispositional factors work in tandem with structural factors to create outcomes of trust and mistrust.

Another, similar critique of the rational choice model of trust is made by Deborah Welch Larson, who proposes a model of trust in International Relations that is rooted in cognitive psychology. She analyses the reasons for the pervasive mistrust that existed between the two superpowers during the Cold War, assessing three potential causes: rational choice preferences, domestic issues and cognitive psychological explanations. Larson claims that cognitive psychology provides the most convincing explanation for what she contends were the many missed opportunities for cooperation during the Cold War. These missed opportunities stemmed from the mistrust between the two states, which was based on 'ideological differences, historical baggage and intuitive mental biases.'<sup>28</sup>

Larson categorises trust into three qualities of 'predictability, credibility and good intentions.'<sup>29</sup> These categories vary from the belief that another's behaviour is merely predictable and they will therefore carry out their expected role competently and as expected, to 'credibility', where trust involves reliance that the trusted party will adhere to any commitments or promises made, to the final category of belief in the trustee's good intentions towards the trustor. This final type of trust is more generalised within the relationship rather than restricted to specific actions or duties. Trust, in Larson's conception, is not just founded on an assessment of the situation and the structure of incentives, but is based on a judgement of the potential trustee's character. This brings in an element of emotion that goes beyond a purely rational, strategic action or decision. In Larson's account of trust, like in a rational choice account, knowledge does play a role but it is filtered through interpretations and biases that are not always based solely in reason. Trust goes beyond mere expectation and also contains a normative constituent; one feels outrage as well as merely disappointment when trust is dishonoured. Assessment of potential trustworthiness 'is qualitative rather than quantitative, perceptual rather than concrete, and influenced by the history of her relations with the other, which gives some events symbolic value.'<sup>30</sup> Therefore, actions that may be interpreted as unfavourable in

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<sup>28</sup> Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 20.

one set of conditions may be judged favourable if a generalised belief in the other's good intentions already exists within the relationship.

Other recent work has also critiqued the assumption that trust in International Relations should be conceptualised as just a strategic choice to cooperate. Jonathan Mercer criticises the understanding of rationality as completely distinct from psychology and emotion in the rational choice literature. He questions the prevalent assumption that psychology can only explain deviation from pure rationality.<sup>31</sup> Based on social identity theory, Mercer suggests that trust is an 'emotional belief' and involves feelings that go beyond observable evidence or mere reliance on predictability.<sup>32</sup> He proposes that trust is founded on an emotional identification with other members of a perceived in-group.

Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler claim that the rational choice view of trust is unable to comprehend the possibility that actors in the international realm might develop a trusting relationship that could function separately from any structure of incentives and pay-offs. They raise the possibility of a connection between trust and the idea of friendship and propose an approach, based upon the work of Martin Hollis, which considers trust as a form of 'binding'.<sup>33</sup> Thinking about trust as 'binding' incorporates a normative dimension to the concept where agents place value on the continuance of the trusting relationship that is detached from any specific pay-offs.

Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler assert the value of trust which they believe to be 'basic to all society'.<sup>34</sup> They describe trust as existing along a continuum which stretches from the strategic 'trust-as-predictability' to '*interpersonal bonding* [emphasis in original]'.<sup>35</sup> While allowing for variation in the scope and intensity of trust along this scale, Booth and Wheeler argue for the necessity of an emotional base to trust that cannot be properly accessed by a rationalist understanding. They also claim that the capacity for empathy is a key pre-condition to any trust-building. For Booth and Wheeler, the success of trust is reliant on what they describe as 'the world of feelings', so in order to better

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<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Mercer, 'Emotional Beliefs,' *International Organization* 63, no. 4 (2010): 1-31.

<sup>32</sup> Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology,' 95.

<sup>33</sup> Ruzicka and Wheeler, 'The puzzle of trusting relationships,' 73.

<sup>34</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 229.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

understand its properties they advocate a ‘multi-disciplinary approach rooted in a fuller appreciation of the human factor.’<sup>36</sup>

All of the authors reviewed above have claimed that the rational choice approach to the study of trust is somehow lacking in its explanatory ability. They have argued that the traditionally dominant, rational choice accounts of trust equate trust with knowledge and that trust therefore remains unexplained and often redundant in these accounts. They have therefore attempted to develop an alternative means of talking about trust. However, later parts of the chapter will illustrate how these alternative accounts nonetheless share the same approach to meaning as the rational choice approach and are therefore limited in the same manner.

### *Trust and the ‘practice turn’ in International Relations*

In his work on trust, Torsten Michel reviews the rational choice approach to trust and its critics and finds both lacking. He critiques the rational choice accounts of trust which he claims have ‘so far overlooked the central role of emotions in acts of trust.’<sup>37</sup> However, Michel is also critical of previous accounts of the nature of emotion in trust by authors such as Booth and Wheeler, Larson and Rathbun. He argues that, while these accounts criticise the rational choice approach, they have still been unable to fully explain the role of a ‘human factor’ within trust, merely treating it as ‘a black box whose existence is confirmed but its nature unexplored.’<sup>38</sup> In fact, while these authors criticise the rational choice approach, Michel asserts that these accounts nonetheless ‘remain very close, if not completely in line, with a rationalist conception of trust and therefore forfeit any substantial advancement beyond earlier conceptions.’<sup>39</sup> He argues that all the existing accounts of trust pre-structure their method of inquiry ‘in such a way as to imply a specific nature of trust (as a result of human decision-making) and also a specific way of studying

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 234. See also Nicholas J. Wheeler, ‘Beyond Waltz’s Nuclear World: More Trust May be Better,’ *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (2009): 428-445; Nicholas J. Wheeler, ‘Investigating diplomatic transformations,’ *International Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2013): 477-496.

<sup>37</sup> Torsten Michel, ‘Time to get emotional: Phronetic reflections on the concept of trust in International Relations,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 4 (2012): 870.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 873.

<sup>39</sup> Torsten Michel, ‘Trust, Rationality and Vulnerability in International Relations,’ in Amanda Russell Beattie and Kate Schick, eds., *The Vulnerable Subject: Beyond Rationalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 87.



it (its correlation with certain enabling conditions)'.<sup>40</sup> Because the authors who advocate for a more emotion-driven conception of trust still ask their questions about trust in terms of trust as a conscious choice for dealing with uncertainty, the questions 'already contains a rationalist-oriented conception of trust before any research has actually been done.'<sup>41</sup>

Michel argues instead for a more nuanced conception of the term with complementary rational and non-rational approaches, proposing a manner of examining trust as an 'inarticulate disposition'.<sup>42</sup> He argues that the common method by which scholars of International Relations talk about trust is part of a wider representational bias in the discipline that prioritises the conscious and the reflexive side of social activity. Michel proposes incorporating a more non-conscious and inarticulate approach to trust that has its origins in a 'logic of practicality'.<sup>43</sup> He contends that by focusing more on the practice of trust and combining representational and non-representational approaches to the topic, it is possible to come to a more complete and nuanced understanding of the nature and characteristics of trust.

Michel's work on trust is influenced by recent work by authors such as Vincent Pouliot, who have contributed to the rise of a practice turn in International Relations.<sup>44</sup> Pouliot maintains that the pervasive representational bias in social theory inhibits scholars from thinking about the importance of practical knowledge and the 'non-representational bedrock on which practices rest.'<sup>45</sup> He argues for the need to investigate the logic of practice in the field of diplomacy and builds on Bourdieu's sociology to develop a theory of practice in security communities.

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<sup>40</sup> Michel, 'Time to get emotional,' 874.

<sup>41</sup> Michel, 'Trust, Rationality and Vulnerability,' in Beattie and Schick, eds., *The Vulnerable Subject*, 93.

<sup>42</sup> Michel, 'Time to get emotional,' 875.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See also Ted Hopf, 'The logic of habit in International Relations,' *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 4 (2010): 539-561. For an account of this recent upsurge in Bourdieu-influenced accounts of practice and its connection to a longer tradition of Aristotelian thinking on phronesis in classical realism see Chris Brown, 'The "Practice Turn", Phronesis and Classical Realism: Towards a Phronetic International Political Theory?', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 3 (2012): 439-456. Iver B. Neumann has also written on the potential for a synthesis of the linguistic turn and the practice turn through a model of culture used to study diplomatic practices. Iver B. Neumann, 'Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy,' *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002): 627-651.

<sup>45</sup> Pouliot, *International Security in Practice*, 14.

The Wittgensteinian influence on this practice-based approach can be seen in Pouliot's acknowledgement of Charles Taylor's reading of the Wittgensteinian concept of rule-following. Taylor describes a non-intellectualist, non-representational take on understanding that is 'always against a background of what is taken for granted, just relied on.'<sup>46</sup> He claims that 'much of our intelligent action in the world, sensitive as it usually is to our situation and goals, is carried out unformulated', instead it 'flows from an understanding that is largely inarticulate.'<sup>47</sup> Understanding is a process of rule-following rather than a process of interpretation. The action one would take when confronted with a sign (the example Wittgenstein provides is a sign post with an arrow pointing the way) comes from being trained to react in a certain way to this sign. A person will follow the arrow sign, not because they interpret the sign as representing a particular meaning that comes to mind when seeing it, but because they have learned the 'custom' of following the rule associated with it through convention.<sup>48</sup>

Taylor argues that this rule-following is not however a 'brute causal link', that is imposed on the individual who then reacts automatically, but contains a sense that is 'embodied and not represented' rather than intellectual or mindful.<sup>49</sup> This sense, or 'practical wisdom' as Taylor describes it, is the embodied knowledge of how to act in a given situation or when confronted with particular sign. It is the reciprocity between the practice and the rule that animates the rule so that the rule 'lies essentially in the practice'.<sup>50</sup> Through this rejection of the representational view of understanding, Taylor contends that Wittgenstein 'helped us break the philosophic thrall of intellectualism', a beginning that was taken up by social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu who in turn have been adopted by contemporary authors in International Relations.<sup>51</sup>

While there is doubtless a level of compatibility between the Wittgensteinian approach taken here and the turn to practice in the study of trust advocated by Michel (and more broadly by Pouliot), Michel nonetheless remains enmeshed in the representational view of meaning in how he talks about trust. While recognising some of the limitations of talking about trust as it is typically done, he nonetheless continues to work within these

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<sup>46</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 167.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>48</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 198.

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 174.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 180.

limitations by maintaining a representational approach to the meaning of trust, as expressed in his wish for a more correct definition of what he terms the ‘very nature of the phenomenon’.<sup>52</sup> In a similar manner to this work, he argues that certain assumptions are already embedded in the questions that we ask about trust and International Relations, and that these assumptions shape and limit the avenues for research. However, he does not go forward with this idea to acknowledge that taking this stance would have a wider implication for the type of questions one can ask or the way in which one can talk about the ‘meaning of trust’.

By moving toward this more practice-based approach while retaining the idea of a true nature and meaning for trust, Michel retains some of the contradictions he has correctly highlighted in the other literature. While the ideas of non-representational research in Michel’s work move away from the picture view of language in some respects, it nonetheless remains confined by the typical language of the representational view and its need to understand the ‘nature of trust’.<sup>53</sup>

### **Trust in the social science literature**

Each of the previous approaches to trust in International Relations is based on a wider foundation of multi-disciplinary trust research and is inspired by established literature on trust in philosophy, political science and comparative politics, cognitive and social psychology, and organisational and management theory. For example, there has been a large amount of literature in US political science on declining levels of trust in government using data from large scale government surveys such as the National Election Studies (NES) and the General Social Survey (GSS),<sup>54</sup> or looking at the importance of

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<sup>52</sup> Michel, ‘Time to get emotional,’ 875.

<sup>53</sup> Michel, ‘Trust, Rationality and Vulnerability,’ in Beattie and Schick, eds., *The Vulnerable Subject*, 104.

<sup>54</sup> See Jack Citrin, ‘Comment: The Political Relevance of Trust in Government,’ *American Political Science Review* 68, (1974): 973-988; Jack Citrin and Samantha Luks, ‘Political Trust Revisited: Déjà Vu all over again,’ in John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, eds., *What Is it about Government that Americans Dislike?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Timothy Cook and Paul Gronke, ‘The Skeptical American: Revisiting the Meanings of Trust in Government and Confidence in Institutions,’ *The Journal of Politics* 67, no. 3 (2005): 784-803; Marc Hetherington, ‘The political relevance of political trust,’ *American Political Science Review* 92, no. 4 (1998): 791-808; Arthur Miller, ‘Political issues and trust in government: 1964-1970,’ *American Political Science Review* 68 (1974): 951-972.

levels of trust across different countries and the role of trust in democracy promotion.<sup>55</sup> Much work on trust has also been done in the area of management and organisational studies with a focus on building or maintaining trust both within and between organisations and often, though not exclusively, within a broadly rational choice approach.<sup>56</sup> There is also literature on the subject of trust in political and social psychology.<sup>57</sup> The research on trust in International Relations is more recent and thus draws heavily from these different branches of study and there is a high level of crossover between disciplines in the area. Because of this, the study of trust recommends itself as a naturally multi and inter-disciplinary endeavour and there is much encouragement within the literature to seek out such approaches in order to discover an overarching or more coherent meaning for trust within the social sciences that can then be deconstructed, understood and reproduced.<sup>58</sup>

It is therefore helpful to incorporate literature from the wider study of trust in social science into any review of the topic in International Relations. This is important because these multiple ways of conceptualising trust within the social sciences may seem very disparate but, across all disciplines, they generally rest on the same basic, unexpressed assumption. This is that the word ‘trust’ represents a concrete and stable

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<sup>55</sup> Valerie Braithwaite and Margaret Levi, eds., *Trust and Governance* (New York: Sage, 1998); Ernest Gellner, ‘Trust, Cohesion, and the Social Order,’ in Gambetta, ed., *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*; William Mishler and Richard Rose, ‘What Are the Origins of Political Trust?: Testing Institutional and Cultural Comparative Political Studies Theories in Post-Communist Societies,’ *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 1 (2001): 30-62.

<sup>56</sup> See Reinhard Bachmann, ‘Trust, power, and control in trans-organizational relations,’ *Organization Studies* 22, no. 2 (2001): 337-365; Reinhard Bachmann and Andrew C. Inkpen, ‘Understanding Institutional-Based Trust Building Processes in Inter-organizational Relationships,’ *Organization Studies* 32, no. 2 (2011): 281-301; Gregory A. Bigley and Jone L. Pearce, ‘Straining for Shared Meaning in Organization Science: Problems of Trust and Distrust,’ *Academy of Management Review* 23, no. 3 (1998): 405-421; Larue Tone Hosmer, ‘Trust: The connecting link between organizational theory and philosophical ethics,’ *Academy of Management Review* 20, no.2 (1995): 379-403; Roderick M. Kramer, ‘Trust and distrust in organizations: emerging perspectives, enduring questions,’ *Annual Review of Psychology* 50, (1999): 569-598; Roy Lewicki, Edward Tomlinson and Nicole Gillespie, ‘Models of Interpersonal Trust Development: Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Evidence, and Future Directions,’ *Journal of Management* 32, no.6 (2006): 991-1022; Guido Möllering, *Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity*, (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> For an overview of recent social psychology research on trust and organisations see Kurt Dirks and David De Cremer, ‘The Repair of Trust: Insights from Organizational Behaviour and Social Psychology,’ in David De Cremer, Rolf van Dick and J. Keith Murnighan, eds., *Social Psychology and Organisations* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010); Roderick M. Kramer and Tom R. Tyler, eds., *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research* (London: Sage, 1996). For a review of the literature on trust in political psychology see Mary R. Anderson, ‘Community Psychology, Political Efficacy, and Trust,’ *Political Psychology* 31, no. 1 (2010): 59-84.

<sup>58</sup> See for example Bigley and Pearce, ‘Straining for Shared Meaning in Organization Science’; Kramer, ‘Trust and Distrust in Organizations’; J. David Lewis and Andrew Weigert, ‘Trust as Social Reality,’ *Social Forces* 63, no. 4 (1985): 967-985; Möllering, *Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity*.

meaning, or set of meanings with a baseline set of necessary and sufficient conditions, and so can be defined, understood and agreed upon on an abstract level. That this is possible is taken for granted but actually rests on a specific, representational view of language and meaning.

What is meant by a ‘representational’ view of meaning is that all the accounts of trust have talked about trust as a word that represents a particular thing that exists in the world. That when one says the word ‘trust’, it refers to a corresponding, relatively stable and independent entity that can be transferred and analysed across differing contexts. This type of theorising is described by Staten as ‘connected with the traditional philosophical picture of mind and meaning, according to which meanings are object-like unities that float about in a homogeneous spiritualised medium called “mind.”’<sup>59</sup> This view of meaning limits the possible ways that we may be able to talk about trust and international politics while placing a constraint on our ability for critique. This particular way of talking about trust also has many conceptual and methodological consequences, yet this assumption about meaning goes unexamined in all the literature about trust. The following section of the chapter will provide a Wittgensteinian challenge to this assumption.

### **‘A picture held us captive’, Wittgenstein and the meaning of words**

The previous section provided an overview of the research on the topic of trust in International Relations and claimed that the current literature rests on the assumption that the ‘trust’ under examination is a word that represents a specific thing in the world whose essence can be defined and understood. This seems like a quite simple or obvious proposition: words represent things. They are labels that correspond to objects that exist in the world. However, this is an incomplete way to think about meaning as well as a source of potential methodological confusion that can complicate any research that is unquestioningly based on this assumption. This part of the chapter will argue that, by admitting the Wittgensteinian approach that for a large class of cases in which we use the word meaning, ‘the meaning of a word is its use in the language’, one can challenge this dominant representational idea of a ‘true’ meaning (or series of meanings) for the word

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<sup>59</sup> Staten, ‘Wittgenstein and the Intricate Evasions of “Is”’, 285.

‘trust’.<sup>60</sup> Acknowledging ‘meaning as use’ entails recognising that the portrayal of language encapsulated in the typical approach to trust, while depicting certain elements of a system of communication (i.e. naming), does not describe everything that we call language. As Wittgenstein contends, this approach is in fact both a description of a ‘primitive idea’ of how language works, as well as a description of ‘a language more primitive than ours.’<sup>61</sup>

The *Philosophical Investigations* challenges this ‘primitive’ idea of meaning by providing what Pin-Fat describes as ‘an investigation into the assumptions (the pictures which hold us captive) which inform the notion of language and thought as representation’.<sup>62</sup> Wittgenstein begins the *Philosophical Investigations* with a quote from Augustine’s *Confessions* in which Augustine describes how his elders taught him to speak by pointing to objects and naming them:

Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires.<sup>63</sup>

Wittgenstein argues that this quote provides a common picture of language within which the words that we speak correspond to certain things and so each word has a meaning. He proceeds to dismantle this picture of meaning and argues that the portrayal of language encapsulated by this quote, while depicting certain elements of a system of communication, does not describe everything that we call language but is in fact an over-simplified idea of how language performs.<sup>64</sup> Understanding language is not simply a question of naming that the representational approach implies. Because all words are not nouns and all nouns are not used in the same way, the representational view can only give a limited account of language.

Also, learning a language cannot simply consist of giving names to things, as this can only function when one has already mastered language. Wittgenstein explains this point through many overlapping examples. By giving an illustration of explaining to

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<sup>60</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 43.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>62</sup> Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relation*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Hanna Pitkin has claimed that by criticising Augustine, Wittgenstein is criticising the approach to language of his own earlier work in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Hanna Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 31.

someone the 'King' piece in chess, he shows that to point to the piece and state that this is a 'King' does not tell the listener anything unless they are already accustomed to the conventions of a game.

In this case we shall say: the words "this is the King" (or "this is called the 'King'") are a definition only if the learner already "knows what a piece in a game is"... We may say: only someone who already knows how to do something with it can significantly ask a name.<sup>65</sup>

The act of naming the 'King' piece only works if those involved have an understanding of the wider context of this act, and are already accustomed to the significance of the naming process. It is only under these conditions that the naming of the 'King' provides an explanation because 'the place for it was already prepared'.<sup>66</sup> Thus meaning as representation only works when located within a background of knowledge.

In another illustration Wittgenstein gives an example of the colour red. He asks, '[h]ow is he to know what colour he is to pick out when he hears "red"?'<sup>67</sup> The representational view of meaning would suggest that an image of the colour 'red' comes before the mind of whoever hears this word. But this picture of meaning is both insufficient and unnecessary. It is insufficient because, as Colin McGinn explains, 'the picture does not in itself *determine* the correct use of the associated word [emphasis in original]'.<sup>68</sup> It does not tell us how to use this word. For example, if one points to a red ball and says 'red' to one who does not know the word, how does one explain that it is the colour you name and not the object, or shape, or specific title, without already having a prior understanding of these things. It is also unnecessary for understanding as there are words for which a picture will not come to mind and there may be many different pictures that come to mind for the same words for different people depending on circumstance. So one needs to be already familiar with language to understand the purpose of this ostensive definition, there must be a level of background understanding within which the word is understood and this will vary with context.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 239

<sup>68</sup> Colin McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning: An Interpretation and Evaluation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 7.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 16.

Therefore we do not understand language by learning an inventory of what words correspond to ‘in reality’, but rather through understanding the different contexts where words are used in practice in our everyday use of language.

### *Understanding and rule-following*

Accepting the Wittgensteinian challenge means that meaning does not rest in the relation between words and the things that they name but is acquired through the practice of following rules that have become connected to the language through repeated use. The mastery of language that must come prior to naming is not a type of knowledge but a practice, so ‘[t]o understand a language means to be master of a technique.’<sup>70</sup> This is because language is actually a host of activities that we perform and not a thing that we acquire and that can be studied in isolation from its use. If meaning is not a matter of labelling and representation but rather a matter of use, not only is meaning extracted from the ways in which a word is used, but understanding becomes the ability to use the word in the correct manner, thus meaningfulness is gained in practice and does not reside outside of it.<sup>71</sup> Therefore the meaning of a word cannot be taken out of the context in which it is felt and expressed, to be analysed on a universal and purely theoretical level.

Meaning can thus be described as a set of rules, attached to a specific context and followed in practice. These rules are themselves constituted and reconstituted through the custom of repeatedly following the rule. This rule-following is not, however, a process of interpretation.<sup>72</sup> As Baker and Hacker explain, Wittgenstein challenges the idea of interpretation as ‘the only possible bridge between a rule and the acts that accord with it’.<sup>73</sup> When one follows a rule it is not because one ‘interprets’ the rule in a certain way and this interpretation then determines the course of action, if this was the case, one could potentially interpret any action as one that follows the rule, as Wittgenstein makes clear: ‘no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>71</sup> See Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*, 15.

<sup>72</sup> Wittgenstein explains his use of the term ‘interpretation’ as ‘the substitution of one expression of the rule for another’, Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 201, and in terms of translation as ‘a rule determining the application of a rule’, Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 84. For a further discussion of this see McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, 14-16.

<sup>73</sup> G. P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 98.



made out to accord with a rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.<sup>74</sup> Therefore an interpretation cannot provide meaning because ‘any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets’.<sup>75</sup> The point is not that understanding never involves a process of interpretation (in terms of translating from one symbol to another) but that it cannot solely do so, for an interpretation must in itself lie on something.<sup>76</sup>

That ‘something’ is a foundation of practical and unreflective knowledge, where understanding is not the ability to interpret what a sign represents but rather the capacity to do something in context. In fact Wittgenstein advises to try ‘not to think of understanding as a “mental process” at all.--For *that* is the expression which confuses you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say, “Now I know how to go on,” [emphasis in original]’.<sup>77</sup> Understanding a language therefore consists of a practice of rule-following that comes prior to interpretation and, as James Tully explains, ‘must consist in the unmediated ability to “grasp” a sign manifested in actual praxis.’<sup>78</sup> Wittgenstein thus extinguishes the gap between understanding and use because, as McGinn states,

the intended effect of characterising understanding in this way is to forge a direct connexion between understanding and use: understanding is essentially connected with use because it precisely is the capacity *to do* certain things with signs [emphasis in original].<sup>79</sup>

Following a rule is a practice that is unreflective and understanding is *in* doing rather than *prior to* doing.

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<sup>74</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 201.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>76</sup> For an application of the difference between ideas of ‘interpretation’ and ‘rule-following’ in International Relations see Fierke, *Changing Games*, 23-29.

<sup>77</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 154.

<sup>78</sup> James Tully, ‘Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy: Understanding the Practices of Critical Reflection,’ in Cressida Heyes, ed., *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy* (Ithaca and NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 38.

<sup>79</sup> McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, 31.

## *Language games*

In this way, learning a language can be compared with learning how to play a game; one learns the rules of a game through playing it and in the context of understanding the activity of playing a game. The term ‘language game’ is an important one in the *Philosophical Investigations* and one that Wittgenstein uses in multiple, though related, ways. Initially, he uses the idea of a ‘language game’ to describe a language that consists only of pointing and naming objects (in this case blocks, pillars slabs and beams) and explains that in this ‘primitive’ language ‘the following process will occur: the learner names the objects; that is, he utters the word when the teacher points to the stone.’<sup>80</sup> This ‘primitive’ language game is one that Wittgenstein uses in order to make a point about the limitations of thinking about meaning as a process of naming and representation. However, he then relates this language game to a host of other practices of language that he terms as language games. This ‘multiplicity of language games’, of things that one does with language, illustrates how naming is only one activity that can be accomplished with language; others he lists include giving orders, speculating, forming or testing a hypothesis, guessing riddles, making a joke, translating, thanking or praying.<sup>81</sup> Each of these examples is an activity that contains its own rules and these are not pre-determined or fixed but rather, ‘new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence and others become obsolete and get forgotten.’<sup>82</sup>

So Wittgenstein uses ‘language games’ to describe these differing practices, what Fierke describes as ‘specific moves with language.’<sup>83</sup> It is through comparison of the multiple ways in which we practice language that we can study meaning, through understanding differing language games ‘as “objects of comparison” which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities.’<sup>84</sup> In other words, we can understand ‘meaning’ through an investigation the different ways in which language is used in these multiple language games.

Wittgenstein also describes all of the words that make up our language, and the activity in which it is practiced as a language game: ‘I shall also call the whole, consisting

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<sup>80</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Fierke, *Changing Games*, 47.

<sup>84</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 130.

of language and the actions into which it is woven, the “language-game”.<sup>85</sup> Here the term ‘language game’ once again highlights the importance of practice in the meaning of language. The label is used, therefore, in slightly different ways throughout the *Philosophical Investigations* but nonetheless with a specific purpose throughout these various uses: to highlight the fact that learning a language is not simply learning the meaning of words. The inclusion of the word ‘game’ repeats to the reader the customary and rule-based nature of language; that meaning does not rest in words representing things, but in how these words are practiced within the activity of the language game.

In this work, the term ‘language game’ refers to a situated way of acting with language in which certain rules are commonly understood. For example, a US presidential pronouncement on national security or a public admonition of a foreign power, in which multiple conventions are expected and understood by the speaker and the audience. This term is used here primarily to remind the reader that any utterance is occurring within a particular context which involves a specific set of linguistic practices.

### *Meaning as use and the study of trust*

If one accepts that language is an activity that is best understood through everyday use, for a word to be intelligible it does not need a fence placed around its potential set of meanings or a minimum requirement of comparability. One does not need to know the definition of the word ‘games’ on a theoretical level to understand that football is a game and walking is generally not.<sup>86</sup> In fact, not knowing the meaning of a word on an abstract level has never impeded the use of the word in ordinary speech. Whether something qualifies as a ‘game’ is not a result of any particular qualities of the activity but whether the word ‘game’ is used as a description. As Allan Janik argues, ‘[i]n terms of the example of ‘games,’ not sharing any finite set of properties by virtue of which they are called games, common usage decides what a game is.’<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Though walking could be made into a game in some manner, which also shows that the characteristics of the activity do not lead to the application of the label ‘game’.

<sup>87</sup> Allan Janik, ‘Notes on the Natural History of Politics,’ in Heyes, ed., *The Grammar of Politics*, 109.

The idea that the word ‘trust’ can mean one, or two, or even twenty different things which all have a minimum baseline of attributes in common and a definite, autonomous boundary around them is thus refuted, as meaning does not encompass this sort of universality or require these set limits. As Wittgenstein explains:

Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all,--but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all “language” [emphasis in original].<sup>88</sup>

Once again Wittgenstein demonstrates this with the example of the word ‘games’. While some games can be described as involving a ball, some by needing skill, luck or some by an element of competition, none of these things apply to *all* the things that we call by the name ‘games’. The activities themselves do not provide an answer; the actual moves involved in chess for example could in another context represent a religious ritual and there is little in common between the actions of playing a game of solitaire and playing a game of tennis. Some games have certain overlapping characteristics, others are similar in certain other ways and these create a ‘complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail’.<sup>89</sup> There is no set space wherein the meaning of the word ‘game’ rests but instead a set of what Wittgenstein terms ‘family resemblances’ of intersecting likenesses among all the ways the word in question is used. Some uses will resemble each other in one way, some in another, with no baseline of necessary characteristics to fulfil the requirement of meaning, like a thread spun from the ‘overlapping of many fibres’.<sup>90</sup> As Pitkin observes, the ‘real point is not features of games at all, but features of the situations in which we talk about games’, the aim is not to qualify what counts as a game or what are the features of a game, but when to use the word ‘game’.<sup>91</sup>

Wittgenstein warns against ignoring the common usage of words and instead presenting meaning as a preconceived notion to which we then bend our experiences. ‘There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all

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<sup>88</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 65.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>91</sup> Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, 65.

*explanation*, and description alone must take its place [emphasis in original].<sup>92</sup> There is no deeper essence to language, there is no new understanding to be found through an abstract examination of our words below the surface of language so we can only order the information that we have and organise what already ‘lies open to view’.<sup>93</sup> As Fierke explains, ‘[w]e cannot get behind our language to compare it with that which it describes’.<sup>94</sup> This view of meaning disputes the idea of a ‘deeper’ meaning that is naturally more significant than any surface-level meaning. Wittgenstein’s proposal of ‘meaning as use’ is thus a challenge to the older view of true meaning which, as Pitkin describes, ‘stresses reference, correspondence, representation...Wittgenstein shows us that this view of meaning cannot be correct, and that this view of language is correspondingly inadequate and misleading.’<sup>95</sup>

Understanding how language works requires recognising its contextual nature and its diversity of meaning. Wittgenstein argues that the search for an essence, or a ‘correct’ meaning is in fact a ‘pursuit of chimeras’, because the deeper one looks into language and the more one removes it from its use, the greater the conflict that then results between the language under examination and our ability to understand it.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, he writes that,

[t]he more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement...The conflict becomes intolerable...We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground! [emphasis in original]<sup>97</sup>

It is on the rough ground of context, experience and the ordinary that we remain safe from the excesses of theory and abstraction.

The *Philosophical Investigations* thus functions as both a means of limitation and of release. The challenge of ‘meaning as use’ limits the tempting inclination to move both above and below ordinary speech. For it is tempting to attempt general explanations, they are more impressive than small, context-bound descriptions that make smaller claims. The Wittgensteinian approach holds us back from this tendency to create grand theories of

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<sup>92</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 109.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>94</sup> Fierke, *Changing Games*, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, 3.

<sup>96</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 94.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 107.

meaning, dragging us back down ‘into the muck of language again’.<sup>98</sup> Meaning as use also hoists us up from the depths of ‘true’ meaning and holds us firm on surface level.

However, the Wittgensteinian approach to language is also a form of release from the necessity of finding correct meanings for words. When one is freed from having to discover what a word actually means, one is not injured by the ‘bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language.’<sup>99</sup> Wittgenstein’s aim is to free the reader from the picture of language as representation, and induce them to question any tendency towards generalisation and the application of the scientific method to language. As he explains,

we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the world as what it is, as an object of comparison--as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.) [emphasis in original]<sup>100</sup>

This provides a warning to those that would abstract meaning from practice. Wittgenstein warns that taking a word in isolation and asking what it means takes it out of the activity in which it is bestowed with meaning and thus renders it less meaningful. Therefore I can tell someone that I trust them, can read a hotel bill that says ‘we trust you have enjoyed your stay’, or exclaim ‘trust her to do that’ and the meaning of the word ‘trust’ expressed in each utterance, though different in each case, is completely clear to anyone who is enmeshed in the practice of our shared language game. It is only when one takes the word out of this practice to ask ‘what is trust?’ or ‘what does it mean to say the word “trust”?’ that its meaning becomes in any way unclear. This is because the representational view of language that is implied by the posing of this question does not provide us with a complete ability to understand how and where language is actually at work. ‘The confusions which occupy us’ Wittgenstein states, ‘arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.’<sup>101</sup>

The common assumption that language is a representation of reality is a restrictive force, it causes us to think that we are able to outline the nature of a thing, to explain the

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<sup>98</sup> Staten, ‘Wittgenstein and the Intricate Evasions of “Is”’, 294.

<sup>99</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 119.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 132.

meaning of a word, because words stand for certain things in ‘reality’ when indeed we are simply recreating our own vision of that meaning.

One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing’s nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.

A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably [emphasis in original].<sup>102</sup>

It is the acceptance of this ‘picture’ of language that is problematic in the current form of the study of trust in International Relations. By implicitly accepting that one can find a meaning for the word ‘trust’ in its representational sense, it becomes tempting to view the notional meaning that one sets around the word ‘trust’ as somehow correct or real.

It is important to emphasise the part of this quote that describes how the picture ‘lay in our language’, and how language ‘seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.’ The assumptions lie in the forms of language that are used to talk about meaning and in this case the meaning of trust. For it is entirely possible that some (or perhaps all) of the scholars who write about trust in the social sciences would not explicitly ascribe to the picture of meaning as a mirror of reality, or think about meaning as representation when asked. But that does not matter, for they talk about trust *as if* they do. The assumptions lie in the language and they have repeated them. Speaking about trust as if the word is representing a thing in the world that has an essence may simply be a function of not thinking about the consequences of the way we talk about certain words, one is just following the conventions of speech and specifically of the language of the social sciences. However, it is this unquestioning acceptance of the consequences of the pictures implicit in our language that can be problematic.

Studying a concept such as trust with an uncritically representational approach to meaning can induce hypostatisation of the concept, giving presence to a meaning that has merely been placed around a word in order to fulfil a certain course of study, and then promoting a view of this construct as a viable object of study in itself. One can begin to believe, or at least express the idea that one is studying the ‘nature’ of trust rather than the frame through which one is looking at the word ‘trust’. This hypostatisation can lead to

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 114-115.

several problematic methodological tendencies within the current study of trust that are outlined in the following section.

### **Some problems attendant to the representational view of trust**

The general inclination to hypostatise one's meaning for trust that is evident in the exiting literature leads to certain problematic tendencies. There are three main tendencies that will be discussed in this section: the urge to define trust, the exclusion of intent in its study and the bestowing of agency on one's description of trust. These tendencies often result in the adoption of three common descriptive fallacies in the existing research, which this chapter will then explain.

#### *The need for definition*

The first tendency to be seen in the current literature is the persistent urge to define trust. This is the main misapprehension, and the source from which most of the other problems materialise. Talking about the word 'trust' as a tool of understanding in the study of International Relations or as playing a role in international politics, requires it to have certain characteristics. These include a stability of meaning across time and space. Trust is thus assigned a constancy of meaning and a universal nature which it is possible to grasp if one is only observant or analytical enough and so the inevitable ensuing question will be 'what is trust?' or, "what does trust mean?"

Whether they would expressly state it or not, researchers in the field discuss trust as a thing whose true nature and meaning can be accessed. The most common approach is that trust is something that needs to be defined and explained and that in so doing, it is possible to make trust generally operational. As a result, many scholars have offered up a definition of trust, and many more have dismissed these as lacking and subsequently proffered their own, superior definitions. However, the idea of 'the' definition of trust and the resulting criticism that 'that is not trust because it is not how I think about trust', is perhaps an unhelpful one. This elevation of one's own meaning for trust, with its attendant proclivity toward the imposition of the idea of more or less legitimate expressions of the



term, is prevalent within the literature and can be illustrated by the following quote from Russell Hardin about public surveys and trust.

As an aside, note that surveys can evoke *prima facie* implausible responses. Self-reported trust in President George W. Bush rose dramatically after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The administration had demonstrably failed badly and yet now people claimed to trust it more than before (*Economist*, June 8, 2002, pp.27-8). It seems likely that the best way to read these weird results is to suppose that they are a patriotic move to rally round the flag, not an assessment of the trustworthiness of the regime.<sup>103</sup>

This dismissal of the feelings of a nation as ‘implausible’ and ‘weird’ is typical of a approach to definition in trust research that assumes the author’s definition is universally applicable and the natural definition of the term, and is therefore what people should be speaking of when they use the word ‘trust’. In fact, these survey results are only anomalous if one accepts that the only way to think about trust is as Russell Hardin describes it; as knowledge-based cooperation based on an assessment of trustworthiness due to the perceived presence of encapsulated interests. Hardin dismisses the common use of the word ‘trust’ as ‘of little theoretical interest’ instead he imposes his conception of trust onto every use of the term and judges its correctness accordingly.<sup>104</sup> This is indicative of an attitude that separates the meaning of trust from the ways in which people actually use the word.

Many similar examples can be found within the trust literature, even in cases where the author ostensibly rejects the typical approaches to studying trust. While acknowledging the challenges of abstract definition, Michel still falls into the trap of declaring what should and should not be contained in any explanation of trust. For example, he complains that one consequence of the assumptions that remain in the emotionally-driven accounts of trust is the ‘rather blurred differentiation of various closely related phenomena, all of which run commonly under the notion of “trust”’, and he argues that ‘the phenomenon of trust has yet to be separated from related yet qualitatively different phenomena such as reliance.’<sup>105</sup>

The critique of the quest for the ‘correct’ definition of trust contained in this thesis does not, however, mean that anyone can describe trust as they please within the academic

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<sup>103</sup> Russell Hardin, *Trust* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 30.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> Michel, ‘Trust, Rationality and Vulnerability,’ in Beattie and Schick, eds., *The Vulnerable Subject*, 105.

literature without fear of criticism. Each conception should be fit for its purpose and can therefore be critiqued on its merits, but with the awareness that this is but one frame through which to describe trust. The trust that one person speaks of may not be the trust spoken of by another, but both share equal claims to validity. It is unproductive to critique another's conception or expression of trust therefore, purely for not fitting with one's own conception of the term because there will be no meaning that can encompass the multiple ways in which the word 'trust' is used in different language games, '[a]gain and again a use of a word emerges that seems not to be compatible with the concept that other uses have led us to form. We say: but that isn't how it is!'<sup>106</sup> This can lead into an unproductive discussion over the correct meaning for concepts that reduces debate to the mere production of thesis and antithesis, 'so we battle back and forth-like the tone of an argument between 2 small children. "Es ist doch nicht es-aber es ist doch so."' <sup>107</sup>

### *The neglect of intent*

The second, related tendency of the literature on trust is that scholars often fail to give adequate recognition to the issue of intent in their own work and do not acknowledge that the purpose of their study may induce them to think about trust in a way that will naturally shape their conception of the term. Instead there is a general wish for a more unified approach to the topic, including a unified understanding of the word. This wish is often repeated throughout the literature and acknowledged as a priority. Roderick Kramer echoes a generally-repeated grievance when he states that

while empirical evidence continues to accumulate at a rapid rate, there has been a dearth of studies using overarching concepts and multiple level measures that might help bridge the increasingly diverse conceptions of trust represented by economic, sociological, and social psychological perspectives.<sup>108</sup>

Lewis and Weigert also complain that,

[a]lthough these groups of [social science] researchers have sometimes borrowed from each other's theory and methods, no general paradigm of trust has emerged

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<sup>106</sup> In Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, taken from Susan B. Brill, *Wittgenstein and Critical Theory, Beyond Postmodern Criticism and Toward Descriptive Investigations* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 7-8.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. (It is not like this-but it is like that.)

<sup>108</sup> Kramer, 'Trust and Distrust in Organizations,' 594.

from their work. Indeed a survey of the massive number of empirical studies conducted by these groups fails to reveal even a common working definition of trust.<sup>109</sup>

Hoffman is more positive about the level of scholarly conformity on the term, stating that while ‘no current single definition serves as a focal point for research...substantial agreement exists about the elements any definition should include or imply.’<sup>110</sup> Following on from this, Guido Möllering expresses his desire for ‘a restored, richer understanding of trust’s nature’.<sup>111</sup>

Scholars have thus considered and promoted trust as a potentially unifying factor throughout disparate disciplines that could warrant its own area of study and as an issue that benefits from a multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary approach.<sup>112</sup> Taking that approach carries the assumption that there exists a core baseline of meaning that can be attributed to the various things that are labelled as trust, a common thread of shared meaning in each use, even though this may not be the case. The challenge of meaning as use suggests that this type of approach to the topic could be less useful than is generally suggested, or at least needs to be carefully considered. In fact, this thesis argues that it is partly this manner of thinking about trust that can be a source of many of the multiple challenges in its study.

Why one uses a word influences how one uses it. The reason for using a word shapes its meaning because, as Fierke states, the ‘process of articulating the question and naming the object of explanation establishes the parameters of the context prior to the analysis itself’.<sup>113</sup> This is something that has not often been considered by those writing on trust but the purpose of one’s study of a concept such as trust should not be separated from the meaning one gives to this concept. Being a more or less trusting person is a different thing to how a polity may trust in political systems or institutions, or how states cooperate under anarchy, conflating or trying to place these things along a continuum or within a hierarchy of importance creates methodological challenges.

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<sup>109</sup> Lewis and Weigert, ‘Trust as Social Reality,’ 975.

<sup>110</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 17.

<sup>111</sup> Guido Möllering, ‘The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension,’ *Sociology* 35, no. 2 (2001): 404.

<sup>112</sup> See for example Gregory A. Bigley and Jone L. Pearce, ‘Straining for Shared Meaning in Organization Science: Problems of Trust and Distrust,’ *Academy of Management Review* 23, no. 3 (1998): 405-421; Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 234; Kramer, ‘Trust and Distrust in Organizations’; Lewis and Weigert, ‘Trust as Social Reality’; Ruzicka and Wheeler, ‘The puzzle of trusting relationships,’ 72.

<sup>113</sup> Fierke, *Changing Games*, 2.

To claim to be practicing the ‘study of trust’ at all is in itself a misleading manner in which to approach the subject that is guilty of ignoring the important question of intent. There is no actual subject of study for trust; one is studying how trust can relate to international cooperation, management strategies, the mechanisms of complex social institutions, psychological dispositions and countless other things. Because of this, the idea of creating a coherent and universal conception of trust to apply across disciplines is problematic. This problem does not lie in the difficulties of creating what Kramer describes as ‘overarching concepts’ of trust, the problem lies in the fact that such an effort is regarded as either possible or constructive.<sup>114</sup> There is no general vision of what trust is, there are only the multiple uses of trust as it pertains to certain topics. The question that should be at the forefront of each analysis of a study of trust is therefore ‘with what intent is trust being examined in this research?’ followed by ‘what do I mean here by trust?’ Acknowledging that there is no single way in which to study trust but instead many ways in which to address the topic depending on the motivation for study means changing the received wisdom the manner in which the word ‘trust’ is generally talked about in the literature.

There are many examples in the literature, from various disciplines, of scholars discussing conceptions of trust with no acknowledgement of intent. For example, Lewis and Weigert develop a sociological version of trust because they assert that ‘while there is a large quantity of research on trust by experimental psychologists and political scientists’ this research ‘appears theoretically unintegrated and incomplete from the standpoint of a sociology of trust’ and that they ‘typically conceptualize trust as a psychological event within the individual rather than as an intersubjective or systemic social reality.’<sup>115</sup> This is despite the fact that it seems perfectly reasonable that psychologists would conceptualise trust as a psychological event. Rathbun criticises rationalists for their reliance on ‘strategic trust’ and exclusion of the concept of ‘generalized trust’ based on social psychology.<sup>116</sup> However similar to criticising an experimental psychologist for not including a sociological base, criticising a game theorist for not focusing on emotion or social psychology is a little beside the point. That is simply not what they do. It is not surprising that the psychologist speaks of trust as a personal characteristic, the sociologist speaks of

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<sup>114</sup> Kramer, ‘Trust and Distrust in Organizations,’ 594.

<sup>115</sup> Lewis and Weigert, ‘Trust as Social Reality,’ 967.

<sup>116</sup> Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 24.

trust as a social phenomenon or the economist speaks of trust as a rational choice enabling cooperation for profit. This is what trust is to each of them and so their conception of trust is, for them, correct.

### *Giving agency to trust*

Another tendency that results from the consensus on the representational view of meaning is the granting of agency to one's conception of trust. The temptation to hypostatise one's meaning for trust that is embedded in the representational view of meaning brings with it the temptation to bestow on this concept the ability to act. Trust not only exists but has agency. For example, Uslander states that trust 'brings us all sorts of good things', 'has consequences' and 'has powerful effects on business and cultural group involvement as well as on charitable contributions and volunteering.'<sup>117</sup> Luhmann asserts that 'trust is a solution for specific problems of risk'<sup>118</sup> while Mercer attributes to it the ability to solve 'collective action problems'.<sup>119</sup> Möllering declares that trust's function 'manifests itself at all levels of society'<sup>120</sup> while Lewis and Weigert say that trust 'allows social interactions to proceed'.<sup>121</sup> Booth and Wheeler ask whether it is possible for trust to 'overcome uncertainty and conquer interstate anarchy?'<sup>122</sup> Others speak of a 'role' for trust. Wheeler discusses the 'role it [trust] could play in transforming adversarial relationships',<sup>123</sup> Ruzicka and Wheeler describe the 'crucial role' played by trust and trustworthiness in upholding the nuclear non-proliferation regime,<sup>124</sup> while Kramer describes the role of trust in 'reducing transaction costs'.<sup>125</sup>

The granting of agency to trust is implicit even in the works of those authors who would claim to avoid this tendency. Rathbun argues for the promotion of a psychological approach to the topic with the admission of the more or less trusting personality as a focus of study within trust research in International Relations. He nonetheless speaks of the

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<sup>117</sup> Uslander, 'The Moral Foundations of Trust,' 1, 20 & 18.

<sup>118</sup> Niklas Luhmann, 'Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives,' in Gambetta, ed., *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*.

<sup>119</sup> Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology in International Politics,' 95.

<sup>120</sup> Möllering, 'The Nature of Trust,' 405.

<sup>121</sup> Lewis and Weigert, 'Trust as Social Reality,' 968.

<sup>122</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 230.

<sup>123</sup> Wheeler, 'Investigating diplomatic transformations,' 478.

<sup>124</sup> Ruzicka and Wheeler, 'Decisions to Trust,' 25.

<sup>125</sup> Kramer, 'Trust and Distrust in Organizations,' 583.

notion of generalised trust as if it has the ability to act independently and to influence situations. Rathbun states that generalised trust ‘helps states initiate cooperation...begins a *reciprocity circle*...allows states to cooperate with new partners [and]...broadens the community circle, extending trust to others [emphasis in original].’ Trust also ‘leaves an impact on the design of international organizations.’<sup>126</sup>

The idea of the agency of trust that is implicit in the language of much of the literature then leads to a set of complex issues about how and where this agency is enacted. This raises many questions about the level of analysis for trust that are not answered within the current research. This is especially important in the study of trust in International Relations where there is a considerable lack of clarity on the topic. Authors generally fail to clarify whether they are speaking about individuals, states or other group actors, and often move between these levels without any comment. There is little consideration of whether the trust they define would be the same thing at the individual or institutional level or how this trust would be transferred between the two; would trust between two leaders or diplomats influence wider state relations and if so, how? Instead, states are imparted with the capability of trusting without due consideration of how this would work, or an acknowledgement of any issues that are raised by treating the state as an actor that can trust.

This carelessness regarding levels of analysis is evident throughout the literature. For example, Michel asserts that ‘IR is mainly concerned with the nature and emergence of trustful relations between agents in the international realm’ and so discusses trust with this in mind, yet he fails to address what the consequences might be of different types of actor.<sup>127</sup> While Kydd acknowledges that trust could have different features and ramifications at domestic and international levels due to the imperatives of anarchy, he does not address the issue of transferring how trust might be felt at an individual versus at state level. In his account of the end of the Cold War, Kydd moves between individuals as agents to states as agents in the context of trust. In his initial explanation of trust he contends that ‘[s]tates that trust each other sufficiently can cooperate; states that do not may end up in conflict.’<sup>128</sup> This implies that he takes the state as his unit of analysis.

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<sup>126</sup> Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 3.

<sup>127</sup> Michel, ‘Time to get emotional,’ 5.

<sup>128</sup> Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust*, 3.

However, within his case studies he speaks of ‘Reagan’s image of Gorbachev’ and ‘Gorbachev’s image of Reagan’.<sup>129</sup> There is also a lack of clarity on the object of trust, whether the trust built through costly signals is focused on the individual, in the role they inhabit or in the institution of the state.

Larson also switches between levels of analysis without explanation of how this would work. Many of her statements are concerned with the leaders of states, which is consistent for a scholar taking an approach based on cognitive psychology, so she makes assertions such as ‘US and Soviet leaders passed up opportunities to cooperate on arms control and on Germany largely because of mutual mistrust’<sup>130</sup> and ‘American leaders fundamentally distrusted the Soviets because they were communists.’<sup>131</sup> However, she also refers to states as trusting or distrustful actors, for example, ‘if two states acutely distrust each other, a single cooperative action may not be enough to elicit a reciprocal response’,<sup>132</sup> or ‘states may not be able to reach an agreement if they distrust each other.’<sup>133</sup> Larson fails to address how these levels of analysis might be different or related. She asserts that,

[c]ognitive psychology holds that the labels people give to events, persons and things shape their interpretation of information and influences their response. This is no less true of international relations. Whether states view another’s action as cooperative, hostile or neutral depends on how they construe its motives.<sup>134</sup>

It is unclear here exactly how this transference occurs. Is Larson claiming that cognitive psychology can be applied to the anthropomorphised body of a state as person, or is it the leader and individuals within that state’s bureaucracy that are the referents? In a subject that has been over-theorised to a large extent, this is an area that has been largely ignored in much of the literature and where much has been accepted without question.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>130</sup> Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*, 5.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>135</sup> In their 2010 article, Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler acknowledge that ‘[m]ost of this research on trust operates at the level of interpersonal relationships. It is of critical importance to find a way of transferring these insights into the much more complicated arena of international politics.’ Ruzicka and Wheeler, ‘The puzzle of trusting relationships,’ 72. The issue of understanding the differences between and identifying a shorthand for an analysis of the differing levels of people, groups and states etc. is obviously not limited to the study of trust, however this area is one that is particularly liable to confusion in the current

### Three descriptive fallacies of the trust literature

Taking an implicitly representational approach to language also influences the methods of explanation that are both available and required for those who study trust. When trust is hypostatised as a thing that can be defined and operationalised in the literature, this way of conducting research then requires a specific and definite type of description that may be at odds with the many ways in which the word is actually used. Because of this tension, scholars have struggled to talk about trust and have often resorted to the common employment of three fallacious descriptive devices. These are: false analogies, multiple typologies and negative description. These devices are often unhelpful and promote fuzzy thinking on the topic, and their use suitably demonstrates the difficulty of trying to capture a meaning for trust that is separate from its use.

#### *False analogies*

There are many examples of the use of false analogies in the literature on trust. For example Uslander, when writing about broad, knowledge-based trust in society, suggests that it is analogous to the following relationship between two people, Jane and Bill:

If Jane and Bill did not know each other, they would have no basis for trusting each other. Moreover, a single encounter will not suffice to develop trust. Jane and Bill have to interact over time to develop reputations for keeping their word. And, even when they get to know each other better, their mutual trust will be limited to what they know about each other. Jane and Bill may feel comfortable loaning each other \$20. They know from experience that each will pay the other back. But Bill won't trust Jane to paint his house and Jane will not trust Bill to repair her roof-since neither has any knowledge of the other's talents in this area.<sup>136</sup>

Hoffman uses an example of hiring a babysitter in order to show how trust and self-interest can be compatible concepts:

Parents, exhausted and at their wits end from caring for their newborn for six weeks without a break ask their neighbour's responsible teenage son to babysit for a couple of hours on a Saturday night. Their request is, of course, driven by their

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literature as authors move between interpersonal and interstate relationships without question and borrow from disciplines that conduct their research on different types of subjects.

<sup>136</sup> Uslander, 'The Moral Foundations of Trust,' 2.



own self interest...But are we to conclude that because these two parents are driven by a self-interested desire to see a movie they have not entrusted the care of their child to their neighbour? Clearly this example involves both trust and self-interest.<sup>137</sup>

Both of these analogies highlight typical features of the problematic way in which trust is described. In the first, Jane and Bill live in a space apparently untouched by social norms, mutual acquaintances, previous experience and all the other complex mechanisms of society whose absence makes this analogy unhelpful. In the second, Hoffman, whose intent is to study cooperation between states, uses an analogy that is qualitatively different from the international realm. Hiring a babysitter or entering into multilateral international security agreements are simply not the same thing. Making the two somehow equivalent may be a useful pedagogical tool in certain circumstances but is also liable to create confusion and make false equivalencies to make its point.<sup>138</sup>

These are just a couple of examples of a widely-used trope within the literature. Luhmann and Hardin both also use the analogy of hiring a babysitter; Luhmann also uses an example of buying a used car. Michel uses an analogy of a married couple monitoring each other's conversations, and there are many more examples.<sup>139</sup> These analogies are not always helpful because they are clumsy ways to think about something that is more complex than the analogy can possibly admit. Perhaps in order to study trust or how people trust for certain purposes it is necessary to simplify the concept to a number of basic mechanisms or heuristics that are suitable for comparison or analysis. However, the fact that this is a simplification often goes unacknowledged by trust researchers. The problem is thus not with the use of analogy but with the presentation of the analogy in these cases as an explanatory rather than merely an illustrative device. How we think about people, decisions and institutions is more complicated than this descriptive device admits, and while simple analogies can be useful tools of explanation, the lack of awareness of intent and context in their use in these cases make them less effective. While critics of rational choice approaches make the valid point that rational theories of trust treat people as interchangeable, this fallacy, which is used across all theoretical

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<sup>137</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 24.

<sup>138</sup> For an overview of the literature on analogy and metaphor in International Relations see Keith L. Shimko, 'Metaphors and Foreign Policy Decision Making,' *Political Psychology*, 15, no. 4 (1994): 655-671.

<sup>139</sup> Luhmann, 'Familiarity, Confidence, Trust,' 2; Michel, 'Time to get emotional,' 19. There is also the associated tendency of using examples from literature as an explanatory tool as for example Hardin does with the use of Dostoyevsky, Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 1-3.

approaches to the subject, makes situations interchangeable in the same reductive manner.<sup>140</sup>

### *The ubiquitous typology*

The second descriptive fallacy within the literature on trust is the common use of a typology. Unable to adequately explain the concept, authors often attempt to define it by dividing it into many different types. Uslaner divides trust into the categories of ‘moralistic’ and ‘strategic’ trust and further subdivides these two categories into ‘generalized’ and ‘particularized’ trust.<sup>141</sup> Seligman separates trust into the categories of ‘abstract’, ‘functional’ and ‘personal’,<sup>142</sup> while Zucker differentiates between ‘process-based’, ‘characteristic-based’ and ‘institutional-based’ trust.<sup>143</sup> Lewicki and Bunker use the similar distinctions of ‘calculus-based’, ‘knowledge-based’ and ‘identification-based’ trust.<sup>144</sup> Booth and Wheeler divide trust not into separate categories, but along a continuum which travels from ‘*functional cooperation* [emphasis in original]’ at one end to ‘*interpersonal bonding* [emphasis in original]’ at the other.<sup>145</sup> Lewis and Weigert divide degrees of trust into nine types based on the amount of emotionality and rationality involved in the bond. This ranges from ‘rational prediction’ to ‘faith’ and includes such types as ‘ideological trust’, ‘emotional trust’, ‘probable anticipation’ and ‘mundane, routine trust’.<sup>146</sup> Möllering describes Cummings and Bromiley’s ‘Organizational Trust Inventory’ of various bases of trust that ‘started off with 273 items, were gradually reduced to sixty-two items and ultimately twelve items through statistical processing.’<sup>147</sup>

While categorisations can be useful analytical tools, this enthusiasm for typologies in the study of trust does not induce clarity but instead is an outcome of the assumptions about the purpose of definition resulting from the representational approach to meaning.

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<sup>140</sup> This point could be made about the use of analogies in general scholarship but it is particularly relevant and prevalent in the study of trust when approached as an endeavour to explain the ‘essence’ of a word.

<sup>141</sup> Uslaner, ‘The Moral Foundations of Trust,’ 3-7.

<sup>142</sup> Adam Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>143</sup> In Möllering, ‘The Nature of Trust,’ 404.

<sup>144</sup> Roy J. Lewicki and Barbara Bunker, ‘Developing and Maintaining Trust in Work Relationships,’ in Robert Kramer and T.R. Tyler, eds., *Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996).

<sup>145</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 229.

<sup>146</sup> Lewis and Weigert, ‘Trust as Social Reality,’ 973.

<sup>147</sup> Möllering, ‘The Nature of Trust,’ 413.

While purporting to define trust, scholars are often left categorising it in opposition to other variants of itself and so current trust research appears to continue to split trust into ever-growing typologies. These typologies do not offer an explanation of trust but instead explain types of trust with reference to other types of trust, resulting in a self-referential and ultimately circular explanation.

### *Negative definition*

The use of typologies to create categories of trust to place in opposition to each other is related to the final descriptive fallacy, the negative definition. This device is also widespread in the literature on trust and is used to explain the nature of trust to the reader by being quite certain about what trust is not. Luhmann asserts with certainty that trust is not familiarity nor is it confidence, and that it is neither fully rational nor fully non-rational.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Lewis and Weigert assert that trust is not faith or prediction or ‘merely expectation’.<sup>149</sup> Mayer et al contend that trust is not ‘taking a risk’ and is not predictability.<sup>150</sup> Hoffman also argues that trust is not predictability.<sup>151</sup> Larson differentiates between trust and expectation while Vincent Keating and Jan Ruzicka claim that trust is not the same as confidence.<sup>152</sup> Hardin asserts that trust is ‘not behavioural’ and Michel argues that trust is not reliance.<sup>153</sup> The common tendency towards negative definition as explanation brings to mind an old joke about the sculptor of a large and particularly impressive statue of an elephant who, when asked by admirers how he had accomplished such an accurate and convincing portrayal of the beast, replied that he had simply taken a large block of stone and knocked off all the parts that did not look like an elephant. This, it appears, is often the tactic of those who are trying to explain the notion of trust; knock off all the parts that are not trust and one will be left with an explanation.

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<sup>148</sup> Luhmann, ‘Familiarity, Confidence, Trust,’ 42-43.

<sup>149</sup> Lewis and Weigert, ‘Trust as Social Reality,’ 970.

<sup>150</sup> Roger C. Mayer, James H. Davis and F. David Schoorman, ‘An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust,’ *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3 (1995): 709-734.

<sup>151</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 21.

<sup>152</sup> Larson, ‘Distrust: Prudent if not always Wise,’ in Hardin, ed., *Distrust*, 35. Vincent Charles Keating and Jan Ruzicka, ‘Trusting relationships in international politics: No need to hedge,’ *Review of International Studies*, Published online 10 April, 2014, DOI: 10.1017/S0260210514000059 Last accessed 18 April, 2014.

<sup>153</sup> Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 10; Michel, ‘Time to get emotional,’ 3.

The use of these three descriptive fallacies tends both to simplify and complicate the study of trust in ways that are not helpful. They simplify it by comparing complex feelings and social dynamics to imaginary situations to make their point, as if they were analogous. They also complicate it by introducing vast typologies and categories in which trust is dissected and by bringing in many other concepts in opposition to trust in order to explain the word. Those who study trust bemoan the complicated and contradictory approaches to the topic, but it is just an unavoidable symptom of the hypostatisation of a concept that follows on from the unquestioned representational approach to meaning that is prevalent in the literature.

### **Don't think, but look! A grammatical approach to trust**

*The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language*

*-Ludwig Wittgenstein*<sup>154</sup>

Taking an alternative approach to meaning in the study of trust and International Relations provides a valuable means of critique of the literature and the ability to question certain presuppositions inherent in its present form. The idea that in taking a word away from its use one is removing the meaning attached to it, is one reason that a Wittgensteinian approach to language and meaning can illuminate the difficulties inherent in the question 'what is trust?' or 'what does trust mean?' that is the inclination embedded in most literature on the topic. This challenge to meaning presents, as Pin-Fat asserts, 'an insurmountable problem for any form of explanation (including explanations in International Relations) that rests on the "discovery" of a property that is common to all instances of phenomena under investigation.'<sup>155</sup> The search for this property demanded by the question 'what is trust?' implicit in the current literature on the topic places a notional theoretical boundary around the word that does not exist in the ordinary way the word is used. This does not mean that there are no limits to the way in which the word 'trust' can

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<sup>154</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 111.

<sup>155</sup> Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*, 11.

be used; of course this is not the case. It means that the possibilities of the word's use are not created by a theoretical minimum requirement of necessary and sufficient conditions that are applied from the outside, but are instead created and maintained in practice, in understanding the word through use.

While the question of meaning and representation has not been discussed to any extent in any of the social sciences literature on the study of trust, several scholars have already brought a Wittgensteinian challenge to traditional ways of understanding and conducting inquiry into the literature on International Relations and political theory. The following section will show how this work fits with and differs from this existing body of literature.

#### *Wittgenstein in social science literature*

Several writers have already argued that the Wittgensteinian approach can provide a challenge to the traditionally dominant pictures of the discipline of International Relations that hold us captive to particular views of how international politics can be understood. Many authors have, both implicitly and explicitly, brought a Wittgensteinian challenge to traditional, positivist theories of politics, social theory and International Relations.<sup>156</sup>

An early attempt to adapt Wittgenstein to political thinking is in Hanna Pitkin's *Wittgenstein and Justice*, which attempted to bring the insights of later Wittgenstein to bear on politics and social theory, contending that the focus that Wittgenstein places on language can expose certain assumptions. She argues that, if language is seen as an activity, this can allow us to investigate the 'nature of political discourse, and of the political.'<sup>157</sup> A Wittgensteinian contribution to political theory would therefore be 'simply an awareness of concepts, a sensitivity to the theorist's use of language'.<sup>158</sup> Pitkin concludes that, regarding a positive contribution to developing political theory, although one could not have a Wittgensteinian political theory in a traditional sense, it was possible

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<sup>156</sup> These writers in also reflect a broader Wittgensteinian-influenced turn to language that can be seen across the disciplines of history, philosophy and political philosophy in the works of authors such as J.L. Austin, Fred Dallmayr, JGA Pocock, Richard Rorty and Quentin Skinner as well as the 'new rhetoric' of authors such as Kenneth Burke.

<sup>157</sup> Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, 4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

to perhaps advance ‘a Wittgensteinian way of theorizing about the political’.<sup>159</sup> Other authors have adapted aspects of Wittgenstein’s work in order to assist their investigations of the political struggles for meaning. William Connolly has disputed the idea of language as a neutral medium in which politics takes place, showing how contests over language are in themselves political in a Wittgensteinian challenge to political science.<sup>160</sup> Chantal Mouffe has argued that the Wittgensteinian approach could provide a new way of thinking about the political and democratic theory that departs from rationalist approaches.<sup>161</sup> James Tully has used Wittgenstein to argue against the entrenched idea that political life can only be free if grounded in some form of critical reflection, using Wittgenstein’s idea of language games to illustrate how ‘justification and interpretation are activities or *practices* of thought’ [emphasis in original].<sup>162</sup> Further literature also exists on Wittgenstein as a social theorist of practice, a claim supported by the recent literature on the practice turn in International Relations as discussed earlier in the chapter.<sup>163</sup> However, as John Gunnell has contended, it has been ‘notoriously difficult to link Ludwig Wittgenstein’s work to the agendas of academic political theory’ as the later Wittgenstein ‘subverts the search for the universality of both politics and political inquiry.’<sup>164</sup> It is, however, Wittgenstein’s avowedly a-political nature that Allan Janik claims ‘constitutes his importance for political philosophy’. Because rules are contestable; speaking is, by nature, political.<sup>165</sup>

While the specific adaption of Wittgenstein in International Relations has also been part of a broader ‘turn to language’ that has challenged the traditional approaches to International Relations that have in the past characterised language as epiphenomenal and

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 325. Though she is not very clear on what this would actually involve.

<sup>160</sup> William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). There has also been work on how a Wittgensteinian approach might affect specific issues in politics, for example Robin Holt, *Wittgenstein, Politics and Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>161</sup> Chantal Mouffe, ‘Wittgenstein, Political Theory and Democracy,’ *Forum for Intercultural Philosophy* 2 (2000) online at <http://them.polylog.org/2/amc-en.html> Last accessed 30 August 2014.

<sup>162</sup> James Tully, ‘Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy: Understanding Practices of Critical Reflection,’ *Political Theory* 17, no. 2 (1989): 172-204.

<sup>163</sup> On the International Relations literature on practice and the turn to language see Iver B. Neumann, ‘Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy,’ *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002): 627-651.

<sup>164</sup> John Gunnell, ‘Desperately Seeking Wittgenstein,’ *European Journal of Political Theory* 3, no.1 (2004): 77.

<sup>165</sup> Allan Janik ‘Notes on the Natural History of Politics’ in Cressida Heyes, ed., *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy*, 104. This volume represents a wider attempt by several authors to bring Wittgenstein to political theory.

have separated action from language,<sup>166</sup> the idea of language as an activity with its rejection of the representational view of language and reality has been adapted by several International Relations scholars who have explicitly adopted various aspects of a Wittgensteinian approach to meaning. Martin Hollis and Steve Smith incorporate Wittgenstein's idea of the 'language game' into their distinction between 'explaining' and 'understanding' in International Relations. Because action is social, meaning is conferred by the sense given by the rules of the 'game,' in this case the rules of the game of international relations. As they state: 'the rules of any "game" create an arena and give sense to what is said and done in it'.<sup>167</sup>

Within a broad social constructivist framework, works in International Relations by Nicholas Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwil put forward an agenda that acknowledged the importance of language and that took, at least in part, a Wittgensteinian approach. In a wide-ranging 1989 work that incorporated much literature on sociology and the philosophy of language, Onuf used the framework of 'rules' and 'rule' to argue for the importance of language for a reconstruction of IR theory.<sup>168</sup> In the same year, Kratochwil argued for a 'fundamental reorientation' of the International Relations research agenda to understand the inherent link between language and the social world, proposing that language, as a 'rule-governed activity' could 'provide us with a point of departure for our inquiry into the functions of norms in social life.'<sup>169</sup> These influential works provided a

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<sup>166</sup> For an overview of the development of this literature Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen, eds., *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2001); Karin M. Fierke, 'Wittgenstein and International Relations Theory' in Moore, C. and Farrands, C. eds., *International Relations Theory and Philosophy: Interpretive Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 2010). For a review of the literature on language and International Relations which includes some more traditional rational choice and political psychology approaches to language and rhetoric see Ronald R. Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson 'Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric,' *European Journal of International Relations*, (37: 35, 2007). For an account of the differences between the Anglo-American post-Wittgensteinian and post-Austinian linguistic tradition and the continental tradition see Michael J. Shapiro's introduction in Michael J. Shapiro, ed., *Language and Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); and Karin M. Fierke, 'Critical Methodology and Constructivism,' in Fierke and Jørgensen, eds., *Constructing International Relations*. For an overview of the 'linguistic turn' see Aletta J. Norval, 'The Things We Do with Words – Contemporary Approaches to the Analysis of Ideology,' *British Journal of Political Science* 30, no. 2 (2000): 313-346 and Ronen Palan, 'A world of their making: An evaluation of the constructivist critique in International Relations,' *Review of International Studies* 26, no. 4 (2000): 575-598.

<sup>167</sup> Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 178.

<sup>168</sup> Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

<sup>169</sup> Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6.

foundation for much social constructivist theory ultimately grounded in a Wittgensteinian approach to language as rule-bound.

Karin Fierke has also argued for the relevance and importance of Wittgenstein in contemporary International Relations debates in several works.<sup>170</sup> In the 1998 book *Changing Games, Changing Strategies: Critical Investigations in Security*, Fierke adapts Wittgenstein's concept of 'language games' to conduct an exploration into the relationship between the manner in which actors both make use of and are constrained by language.<sup>171</sup> Fierke examines the concept of international change through Wittgenstein's ideas of language games and rule-following and applies this to a study of the end of the Cold War and its immediate aftermath. She claims that the language we use shapes our space to manoeuvre politically and so the concept of 'language games', particularly the language game of metaphor, provides a new manner in which one can describe the process of change in international politics. Fierke thus challenges 'the realist argument regarding the distinction between appearance and reality' as she demonstrates how the issue is 'less one of appearance and reality than the contest between language games that provide conflicting frameworks for reasoning and action in the world.'<sup>172</sup>

Gavan Duffy, Brian K. Friederking and Seth A. Tucker have also adapted the idea of 'language games' in order to incorporate contextual factors in game theory modelling of interaction in a 'dialogical analysis' of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty, arguing that the dialogical analysis supports the argument of the influence of the 'new thinking' of Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>173</sup> However, while they have adapted the Wittgensteinian notion of the language game, they place it into a method of game theory modelling that retains an essentially positivist approach.

There have also been recent Wittgensteinian inspired interventions into debates on the meaning of other complex words in International Relations. Shane Mulligan has

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<sup>170</sup> For example Karin M. Fierke, 'Multiple Identities, Interfacing Games: The Social Construction of Bosnia,' *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 4 (1996): 467-497; Karin M. Fierke 'Links Across the Abyss: Language and Logic in International Relations,' *International Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2002): 331-354; Karin M. Fierke, 'Critical Methodology and Constructivism,' in Fierke and Jørgensen, eds., *Constructing International Relations*; Karin M. Fierke, 'Wittgenstein and International Relations Theory,' in Moore and Farrands, eds., *International Relations Theory and Philosophy*.

<sup>171</sup> Karin M. Fierke, *Changing Games, Changing Strategies: Critical Investigations in Security*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>173</sup> Gavan Duffy, Brian K. Friederking and Seth A. Tucker, 'Language Games: Dialogical Analysis of INF Negotiations,' *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1998): 271-293.



conducted a conceptual history of the use of the concept of legitimacy in international affairs through an incorporation of Wittgenstein's idea of language games to understand the continuity and change in the use of legitimacy in the study and practice of international politics.<sup>174</sup> Jonathan Havercroft uses Wittgenstein's discussion of changing aspects to argue that political philosophers should not try to gain an explanation of liberty but should instead view liberty as an 'aspectival concept'.<sup>175</sup>

Véronique Pin-Fat proposes a grammatical 'reading' for her investigation of universality and ethics in world politics.<sup>176</sup> This is based on Wittgenstein's idea of a grammatical investigation as an alternative to traditional theories of ethics. She proposes a reading of ethics in world politics that remains on the service rather than trying to reveal a deeper and universal nature or truth. This grammatical reading also does not make an ontological distinction between theory and practice but views language as action.<sup>177</sup> Pin-Fat advocates Wittgenstein's '*look and see*' approach against the metaphysical temptation to search for depth and the universal in the consideration of ethics in world politics.

This research on trust and international politics adds to the existing literature advocating for the recognition of Wittgenstein in debates over meaning and International Relations by focusing on the dilemmas of definition and explanation that are relevant to much of the existing work on big words such as 'trust' in International Relations. While some of the previous work on Wittgenstein in the social sciences has focused on incorporating Wittgensteinian thought into a way of theorising about the social world, this study uses the *Philosophical Investigations* primarily as a challenge to the traditional theories of meaning held in the literature on trust and international politics and a means of critique of positivist inquiry into trust, it limits its purpose to the locus of the challenge to the dominant way thinking about where the meaning of words resides. Through use of the Wittgensteinian language of description, it advocates a form of inquiry into the use of words in international politics that locates meaning in use. This study uses the *Philosophical Investigations* as a means of highlighting the assumptions about meaning

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<sup>174</sup> Shane P. Mulligan, 'The Uses of Legitimacy in International Relations,' *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 34, no. 2 (2006): 349-375.

<sup>175</sup> Jonathan Havercroft, 'On Seeing Liberty As,' in *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy*, ed. Cressida Heyes (Ithaca and NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>176</sup> Véronique Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations: A Grammatical Reading* (London: Routledge, 2010). Pin-Fat advocates a reading of Wittgenstein in International Relations that rejects the idea of any type of Wittgensteinian theory or method.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

and representation in the existing literature and a methodological tool of reminder about the limitations inherent in the forms of our language.

While this critique does not advocate the abandonment of the word ‘trust’ as a tool of analysis, it does require an acceptance of the locations and limitations of meaning. It challenges the very possibility and usefulness of universal definition, and the effectiveness of attempting to gain consensus on what any concept means. This is not only the case for the trust but many other ‘big’ words whose meaning is much debated in International Relations such as ‘fear’, ‘legitimacy’ or ‘liberty’, all of which have resisted definition and have therefore been discussed as somehow problematic within the literature. However it is not the fact that these words resist definition that is the problem, that is simply how language works, the problem arises when scholars do not recognise this and so attempt to find the ‘meaning of’ these words. As Jens Bartelson argues,

[d]efining a term means making stipulations about its meaning and reference within a given context of employment and according to given criteria; but since both contexts and criteria multiply across time and space, any concept is able to soak up a multitude of different connotations throughout its usage in different contexts and for different purposes, which in turn makes a clear-cut definition seem all the more urgent, provoking yet another attempt at definition that reproduces the initial ambiguity. Hence, ambiguity is an unintended and cumulated consequence of the quest for clarification that has been so dear to the social sciences.<sup>178</sup>

Any attempt to isolate meaning through definition will thus merely be an interpretation from one language game into another. This is not to say that it is not good scholarly practice to define one’s terms in certain conditions, but simply that this should include the consciousness that one’s definition is limited by one’s intent and coloured by one’s disciplinary and methodological background. It is important to be aware of the temptation to hypostatise a notional boundary that has merely been placed around a boundary-less concept in order to fulfil a certain purpose.

For it is those arguments that implicitly rest on the tacit ability to gain the essence of a term that will likely be problematic, rather than any inherent difficulties with particular words themselves. Before we begin a conversation by asking ‘what does trust mean?’ we should first question the assumptions about how meaning works that go into the form of the question and ask ourselves if this is really the most efficient way

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<sup>178</sup> Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 8.

of approaching the topic. We should query whether current debates over 'what is the meaning of' trust begin at an unchallenged consensus about how words get and maintain their meaning, and if they fall prey to the universalist temptation of ignoring the 'rough ground' of context, practice and the everyday.

A definition of trust that locates its nature or essence is not necessary for understanding but, as this chapter has demonstrated, can in fact be counterproductive and confusing. The aim of this research therefore is to avoid the pitfalls that go along with basing a study on a representative approach to the meaning of trust by changing the focus of the study away from the 'meaning of trust' or the 'role of trust' in international politics, to how we talk about trust in international politics (in both its study and its practice). This is done by inverting the nature of the investigation into meaning. Rather than thinking that one cannot understand the meaning of a sentence like 'I can trust you' until one defines the word 'trust' thus working from a previous definition towards a meaning, here the assumption is that the opposite dynamic is at work, and one must understand the function of the sentence before one can understand the meaning of the word.

This research therefore proposes a study of trust that examines the very act of the labelling of trust within its specific historical and social language games. In this way, instead of succumbing to the urge to determine the correct use of a word such as trust, and thus falling into the philosophical trap of a subsequent hypostatisation of this determination, this project can recognise that, as Quentin Skinner claims, all attempts to 'legislate about the correct use of normative vocabularies must be regarded as equally ideological in nature' and investigate these attempts critically.<sup>179</sup> This will be accomplished through the Wittgensteinian notion of a grammatical investigation that will look at the possibilities for talking about trust in International Relations.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Quentin Skinner, 'Rhetoric and Conceptual Change,' *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, no. 3 (1999): 67.

<sup>180</sup> Pin-Fat conducts a similar investigation to the work of three theorists of International Relations on the idea of universality and ethics though she labels this a 'grammatical reading' in order to 'emphasise that the reading of his work here is an applied interpretation', as 'Wittgenstein was not concerned with politics but rather the central concerns of philosophy.' Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*, 19. I am maintaining the use of 'investigation' as I am not providing a close reading of an academic text as Pin-Fat does, and my purpose is limited to a discussion of the location of meanings for the word 'trust' which I hope remains close enough to the spirit of the *Philosophical Investigations* to allow for the retention of its terms.

### **The grammatical investigation: proposing a method of description**

It is the lack of acknowledgment of and engagement with questions of meaning in the primarily rationalist literature on trust in the International Relations literature that has prompted this alternative approach to the study of trust. Current accounts of trust and international politics have presupposed a thing called ‘trust’ that is represented by the use of the word ‘trust’ and exists in reality. This ‘trust’ can therefore be identified or measured according to the parameters and definitions outlined by the researcher in order to tell a truth about the world. As shown earlier in the chapter, this dynamic operates in all the current literature, even that which purports to move beyond a rational choice model. This research proposes an alternative logic of inquiry into ‘trust’, building on the existing literature that has brought the Wittgensteinian challenge to traditional accounts of meaning into the study of International Relations and the social sciences. This section will outline this alternative, grammatical method of investigating trust in International Relations. This is a method of description based the Wittgensteinian notion of grammar and the ethos of ‘*look and see*’.

#### *Wittgenstein and grammar*

Wittgenstein describes grammar as the range of potential for a thing: grammar ‘tells us what kind of object anything is.’<sup>181</sup> It is grammar that gives us a word’s ‘essence’ not some metaphysical connection between word and object.<sup>182</sup> Knowing the grammar of an object means knowing how to act. Fierke gives the example of International Relations as a grammar on which basis ‘any practitioner...knows “how to go on” in constructing an argument or acting in the world.’<sup>183</sup> Grammar, as Pin-Fat explains ‘controls what is possible in the world by regulating the kinds of statements one can make about the world.’<sup>184</sup> The grammar of trust then would include all the ways in which the word ‘trust’ can be used, one can lose trust, gain trust, abuse trust, deserve trust, be trustworthy or entrust for example. It also includes how these uses relate to other concepts and how they are similar or are different. So, for example, losing trust is different to losing one’s keys

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<sup>181</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 373.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>183</sup> Fierke, *Changing Games, Changing Strategies*, 46.

<sup>184</sup> Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*, 21.

and gaining trust has a different meaning to gaining weight.<sup>185</sup> Undertaking a grammatical investigation will thus look at the meaning for trust given within this range of possibilities and how it might overlap with other grammars; the grammar of nuclear weapons or arms control for example. This approach is fundamentally that of Wittgenstein's advice to '*look and see*', which he outlines with regard to the meaning of 'game':

Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games"...What is common to them all?--Don't say: 'There *must* be something common, or they would not be called "games"'--but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.--For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! [emphasis in original]<sup>186</sup>

Wittgenstein is worth quoting at length here to illustrate this difference between the typical approach of attempting to penetrate a phenomenon, for example trust, and conducting a grammatical investigation of the use of trust. He claims that the misleading picture of words as representing things leads us to

feel as if we had to *penetrate* phenomena: our investigation, however, is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the "possibilities" of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the *kind of statement* that we make about phenomena...Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language [emphasis in original].<sup>187</sup>

By keeping this in mind one can avoid the need to uncover something that one thinks is hidden:

But now it may come to look as if there were something like a final analysis of our forms of language, and so a *single* completely resolved form of every expression. That is, as if our usual forms of expression were, essentially, unanalysed; as if there were something hidden in them that had to be brought to light. When this is done the expression is completely clarified and our problem solved [emphasis in original].<sup>188</sup>

This unhelpful notion that there is a final or correct form of understanding our language then influences how we ask questions about language and the world.

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<sup>185</sup> For further examples see Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, 116-121.

<sup>186</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 66.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

This finds expression in questions as to the *essence* of language, of propositions, of thought.--For if we too in these investigations are trying to understand the essence of language--its function, its structure,--yet *this* is not what those questions have in view. For they see the essence, not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look *into* the thing, and which an analysis digs out [emphasis in original].<sup>189</sup>

A grammatical investigation of trust in International Relations should thus problematise the picture of a role for trust in the international system, looking at ‘the *kind of statement* that we can make [emphasis in original]’ about trust rather than digging down to find some hidden meaning or truth below the surface of the language.<sup>190</sup>

Research that takes this approach to meaning as its core has the ability to be truly critical. While some scholars have interpreted Wittgenstein’s rule-following to imply an essentially conservative leaning to the idea of language games and meaning as use, it is possible to see space for critique and for change within this approach.<sup>191</sup> Firstly because the ‘rules’ of the language games in which we engage are taken from our shared ‘play’, they are not imposed on us from above but rather a general description of what we do in practice.<sup>192</sup> Secondly, as Pitkin explains, ‘the same ordinary language that allows the expression of various common-sense beliefs also allows their negation, their questioning, their doubting.’<sup>193</sup> The grammatical approach to meaning allows us to challenge the pictures of the world. As Pin-Fat describes, it ‘opens space for us to ask, though not yet answer, how it is that rules appear ‘natural’ as a representation of ‘how things are’; how ‘reality’ is constituted and its effects.’<sup>194</sup> Fierke has described the Wittgensteinian approach as the ‘application of a method’ of ‘critical description’<sup>195</sup> that is indeed ‘implicitly critical, insofar as it demonstrates the power of language, its social underpinning and its ability to constrain and bewitch.’<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>190</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 90.

<sup>191</sup> See McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning* for a further refutation, also Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*, 17.

<sup>192</sup> Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, 18.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>194</sup> Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*, 18.

<sup>195</sup> Karin M. Fierke, ‘Critical Methodology and Constructivism,’ in Fierke and Jørgensen, eds., *Constructing International Relations*, 127.

<sup>196</sup> Karin M. Fierke, ‘Wittgenstein and International Relations,’ in Moore and Farrands, eds., *International Relations Theory and Philosophy*, 92.

The point of the grammatical investigation is thus to stay on the surface of language. It rejects the idea of the possibility of a more true meaning for trust than what we mean when we say the word ‘trust’. This investigation of trust will, therefore, ‘*look and see*’ the meaning given to trust in context rather than imposing a meaning of trust onto the situation under study, thereby providing a critical description of the particular ways in which the word ‘trust’ was used, and the different political contexts in which the meaning of the word ‘trust’ was shaped. Rather than talking about what trust is, it will look at how the word ‘trust’ was used in context, replacing the application of a certain abstracted meaning for trust with a grammatical search for meaning within each particular trust language game. If the examination of trust as ‘playing a role’ in international politics that is dominant in the trust literature is a picture of the world, the Wittgensteinian grammatical investigation will rather ‘investigate how the *application* of the picture goes [emphasis in original].’<sup>197</sup> The following section will outline how this will be accomplished.

#### *Description as method*

Wittgenstein’s exhortation to ‘do away with all *explanation* [emphasis in original]’, and that ‘description alone must take its place’, is a warning of the implications of an approach to philosophy that privileges the methods of science and of covering-law explanations in the understanding of language.<sup>198</sup> While he states that philosophy can only ‘describe’ language, Wittgenstein is offering a caution against attempts to delve beneath the surface of language when looking for the meaning for a word.<sup>199</sup> By placing ‘explanation’ and ‘description’ in opposition to each other, he provides a reminder that any search for a true meaning that goes beyond the singular to make statements about the universal or the abstract will be misunderstanding the nature of philosophical problems, which can be solved by ‘looking into the workings of our language’ and arranging the information that we already know.<sup>200</sup> Therefore, ‘description’ is a way of addressing a problem that takes its cue from the specific context and the situation under study that could, in fact, incorporate different or multiple methods in practice. Description thus invites a plurality of

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 374

<sup>198</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 109.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. Wittgenstein describes the work of the philosopher as consisting of ‘assembling reminders for a particular purpose.’ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 127.

possible methods while retaining a non-positivist methodology based on context, interpretation and meaning as use.<sup>201</sup>

The following two chapters will conduct a particular method of description and carry out a study of the public use of the word ‘trust’ by two US Cold War presidents in relation to nuclear arms and arms control during the Cold War. By doing so it will put forward a non-positivist line of enquiry that relies on interpretation and an openness to difference in meaning. It will accomplish this through a description of the use of trust by President Richard M. Nixon and President Ronald Reagan regarding nuclear weapons and nuclear arms control with the Soviet Union. These examples were chosen for investigation as much of the literature on trust in International Relations focuses on the Cold War, particularly on the issue of nuclear weapons as its case and tries to ‘explain’ certain action or lack of action through using a particular definition of trust as a causal factor.<sup>202</sup> As was outlined in the introduction, the consequences of the nuclear revolution place certain, fundamental imperatives on the conduct of politics and the international, and therefore result in a particular significance on any meaning for trust. The Cold War and specifically the area of nuclear weapons are also apposite topics for any research that examines language, as public diplomacy and propaganda was such an important feature of the era.<sup>203</sup> The two presidents under study in the following chapters were chosen as both were Cold

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<sup>201</sup> I am here using a particular distinction between ‘method’ and ‘methodology’ in which methodology refers to a logic of inquiry, the ‘presuppositions concerning ontology—the reality status of the “thing” being studied—and epistemology—its “know-ability”—which inform a set of methods’, these being the tools ‘with an through the research design and its logic are carried out or enacted.’ Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, ‘Introduction’, in Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, eds., *Interpretive Approaches to Research Design* (London: Routledge, 2012). This is, however, not the only way to distinguish methods and methodology, for an alternative see Claudia Aradau and Jef Huysmans, ‘Critical methods in International Relations: The politics of techniques, devices and acts,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 3 (2014): 596-619.

<sup>202</sup> The most famous being Reagan’s repeated ‘trust but verify’, with regard to the practice of arms control with the Soviet Union. See for example Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*; Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler, ‘The puzzle of trusting relationships in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,’ *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 69-85; Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler, ‘Decisions to Trust: Maintaining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime,’ *RUSI Journal* 155, no. 2 (2010): 20-25; Nicholas J. Wheeler, ‘Beyond Waltz’s Nuclear World: More Trust May be Better,’ *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (2009): 428-445.

<sup>203</sup> There is a significant body of work on Cold War rhetoric and nuclear weapons including Paul Chilton, ed, *Language and the Nuclear Arms Debate: Nukespeak Today* (London: F. Pinter, 1985); Carol Cohn, ‘Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,’ *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture* 12, no. 4 (1987): 687-718; Martin J. Medhurst and H.W. Brands, eds, *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History* (College Station Texas: A&M University Press, 2000); Martin J. Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, and Robert L. Scott, eds, *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997); David S. Meyer, ‘Framing National Security: Elite Public Discourse on Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War,’ *Political Communication* 12, no. 2 (1995): 173-192.



War presidents; both were also Republicans and thus spoke of national security and the Soviet Union in a different way to a Democratic president. Both were also regarded as staunch anti-communists and hardliners regarding the Soviet Union throughout their political careers before assuming office. However, the two presidents undertook major nuclear arms control efforts with the Soviet Union which resulted in significant arms control agreements.

The chapters are primarily based on an examination of archival documents from the Nixon and Reagan administrations collected in the Nixon Presidential Library and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, as well as the collected public speeches given by the presidents contained in the *Public Papers of the Presidents* and the public statements from the Department of State in the *Department of State Bulletin*.<sup>204</sup>

The method of description undertaken in this research involved adopting a Wittgensteinian ‘look and see’ approach to these primary documents. Instead of predetermining a meaning for trust with an associated set of criteria for which to search in an examination of the archival evidence, this research did not approach the primary sources with any predetermined narrative or hypothesis to test. Instead, the grammatical investigation involved a systematic reading of the documents regarding nuclear arms programmes and arms control with the Soviet Union, as well as the documents regarding their public presentation and communication strategies, to assess if members of the administration talked about trust at all and if so, how. The presidential statements using the word ‘trust’ were examined for the way in which the word was used, the audience, context of the speech, and the other words in the speech used with trust and in relation to trust in order to create a ‘grammar of trust’ for each president. For example, chapter two will show how President Nixon used the word ‘trust’ in relation to words such as ‘responsibility’, ‘intelligence’, ‘judgement’, ‘facts’ and ‘information’. Nixon associated these words with trust and thus situated his meaning within this set of other concepts, giving a grammar for the word ‘trust’ that was specific to his use in context.

To understand the grammar of trust within its personal, social and political context, public statements in speeches, press conferences and interviews were cross referenced

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<sup>204</sup> *The Public Papers of the President* are available online at the *American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/> Archived copies of *The Department of State Bulletin* are available online at <https://archive.org/details/USGovernmentDocuments>

with the internal White House dialogue on communication, media and the presentation of policy from the corresponding times. This involved an examination of documents from both those responsible for policy-making and those responsible for communications, though this difference in practice was virtually nonexistent and policy and its communication were, more often than not as will be shown in the historical chapters, occurring at the same time and mutually influencing. To further situate the presidential grammar of trust in its historical context, the study also uses contemporary newspaper articles and memoirs of administration officials as well as secondary literature on the topics. Importantly, however, this does not involve using these texts as a source of post-hoc explanations or retrospective analyses of the meaning or role of trust by the actors involved at the time, but rather as the historical scene setting within which the contextual meaning was created.<sup>205</sup> Through this, the historical studies put forward a method of description that is contingent, contextual and interpretive, and does not rely on a representational account of meaning, as seen in previous studies of trust in International Relations.

It should be noted here that this method does not involve the proposition of an alternative, Wittgensteinian theory of meaning or language to that which is seen in the existing literature. Wittgenstein's purpose in the *Philosophical Investigations* is principally a negative one. His goal is not to develop a theory of meaning to replace the one that he diagnoses as so problematic in the activity of philosophy but, as Baker and Hacker describe, to 'show the absurdity of thinking that our concepts are, in some deep sense, *correct* [emphasis in original].'<sup>206</sup> There is no Wittgensteinian theory of language that can be applied, no general prescription; his goal is merely to uproot the existing problematic tendencies of how we think about language and understanding.<sup>207</sup> This is indicative of his view that philosophy is not a body of work but an activity and is reflected in the form of the *Philosophical Investigations* which has little linear trajectory but is a series of examples and stories that return to make several interlocking points to be kept in

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<sup>205</sup> This tendency to identify a role for trust by analysing retrospective accounts by practitioners has been identified by Vincent Charles Keating and Jan Ruzicka in their recent work on the study of trust in International Relations: Keating and Ruzicka, 'No Need to Hedge'.

<sup>206</sup> Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, 232.

<sup>207</sup> There are various levels to which this is taken to apply in different readings of Wittgenstein, work that takes a slightly more prescriptive reading includes Saul Kripke, 'Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language,' in Irving Block, ed., *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981). For a refutation of this view see McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*. For an International Relations perspective see Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*.

mind before undertaking philosophical work. The point is to keep the reader thinking and questioning the common explanations for how language works, rather than to provide an alternative explanation.<sup>208</sup> The purpose is therefore, as McGinn describes, a ‘therapeutic’ one, his contribution to an account of language is mainly ‘to act as an antidote to mistaken or misleading conceptions of meaning.’<sup>209</sup>

It is thus perhaps better to think of the descriptive methodology adopted here as an admission or a reminder of the limitations that inform our descriptions. Pitkin speaks of a ‘kind of self-knowledge’ that ‘[h]owever much we struggle to define the essence of a concept, or to defend the essence we think we have found, we cannot escape our tacit knowledge of how words are actually used.’<sup>210</sup> The methodology of description is thus an attempt to read with the ‘self-knowledge’ of the implications of one’s attitude to meaning. It is an admonition against the struggle to overcome the inconsistencies and contradictions of meaning and a reminder that these very inconsistencies and contradictions are the rough ground on which language works. This type of reading is described by Pitkin as a shift in attention,

not just from the world to concepts, but from concepts to the corresponding words, and from a quest for the essence of their meaning to the mere description...of how they are actually used in contexts where they are most at home.<sup>211</sup>

With regard to the study of ‘trust’ in international politics, the point that this study will demonstrate through this grammatical description is that the terms that we use to talk about the world will necessarily frame what we can and cannot ask. Therefore asking how these terms, such as the idea of the ‘role of trust’, come about and are used can offer an alternative and more critical account than accepting the validity of these terms and thus their boundaries. There may be no reason to demand the dismantling of the pictures of trust as ‘acting’ or ‘playing a role’ within International Relations, but merely a need to acknowledge that these are particular pictures of the world so that we can attempt to

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<sup>208</sup> Wittgenstein writes in the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations* that he ‘should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thought of his own’. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, viii.

<sup>209</sup> McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, 1. To quote Wittgenstein: ‘The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.--The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question.--Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off.--Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem.’ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 133.

<sup>210</sup> Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, ix.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

understand the implications and limitations of the frames. As Wittgenstein states, '[t]he picture is there. And I am not disputing its validity in any particular case.—Only I also want to understand the application of the picture.'<sup>212</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on trust in International Relations and has situated this work within a wider body of research on trust in the social sciences. While the existing literature takes many forms: rational choice studies, research based on social and cognitive psychology and work on emotions in politics, this chapter has argued that as a whole, the literature is notable for relying on a specific assumption about words that views meaning as representation. This is the foundation for a research agenda in International Relations which talks about trust as an internal motivating source for action and which therefore requires trust to possess general characteristics that can be understood, defined and operationalised with the tools of social science. The literature thus frames understanding trust as a process of 'discovering' what thing is represented by the label trust.

The chapter has argued that this way of talking about trust is not the only or natural one, but that it is predicated on a particular approach to meaning as representation that has an impact on the direction of the subsequent research. The chapter has also claimed that accepting this specific approach to understanding actually places certain methodological and semantic imperatives onto the work. By accepting that trust has 'a meaning' in its representational sense, the ensuing question must be 'what does trust mean?' By privileging this approach to understanding, scholars are left with the need to explain trust, which can result in a search for a correct or unified understanding of trust in abstract. This approach to meaning places an imaginary boundary around trust through the imperatives for definition and then holds up this definition as an object of study in itself. This leads to the hypostatisation of one's definition of trust as something with universal characteristics that both 'is' and 'does'. The chapter has shown that this results in certain problematic tendencies in the current literature and the common use of three descriptive fallacies: false analogies, multiple typologies and negative description.

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<sup>212</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 423.

As a challenge to this dominant method of talking about trust in International Relations, the chapter introduced the Wittgensteinian approach of ‘meaning as use’ and through this, contended that words cannot be understood in abstract but should be investigated on the rough ground of their everyday use. The chapter ended by proposing an alternative methodology for talking about trust in International Relations, through a grammatical investigation that would stay on the surface of language and look at the use of the word ‘trust’ in its context rather than imposing a definition of trust onto a situation.

This work is thus an exercise in acknowledging the picture that we have put in place in conducting the study of trust and an attempt to avoid the tendency towards talking about meaning as representation. The attempt exists as a challenge to the study of trust within both the International Relations and general social science literature, as well as a challenge to the wider pictures about meaning that are implicit in how we write about certain words in the study of International Relations in general.

This chapter has provided a conceptual challenge to the consensus on language and meaning in the current literature on trust. The following two chapters will provide an empirical challenge to this body of research that will reinforce the conceptual challenge. It will accomplish this by undertaking a grammatical investigation of trust in international politics. This investigation will describe the meaning of trust in each situation by looking and seeing how the word ‘trust’ is being used back on the ‘rough ground’ of everyday speech. Through conducting a grammatical description of the use of trust by two US Cold War Presidents, the following chapters will provide an ostensive example to support the Wittgensteinian argument that premising study of a word such as trust on the assumption that all cases of trust share a common thread of meaning risks ignoring the specifics of meaning that could contribute to our understanding of international politics.

## **‘Trust me, I’m the president’, Richard Nixon and the battle for Safeguard**

*Nixon himself, as is well known, in terms of his personal traits is a very petty and distrustful man with a huge ego...Every step or response to the President by us is viewed at the White House through a magnifying glass to see if there might be some sneaky trick here or a wish to “deceive or demean” the President personally. In short, Nixon measures everything by his own yardstick.*

- Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin <sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

This chapter conducts a grammatical investigation of President Richard Nixon’s use of trust regarding nuclear arms and nuclear missile defence during his first term in office. It will contend that Nixon’s use of trust within the public debate on deployment of the Safeguard Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) system was a product of the political and social background within which it was used. It will illustrate how Nixon’s specific use of trust in the debate on missile defence was shaped by his political persona and approach to governance and foreign policy, the contemporary political climate and the unique demands on politics of the nuclear revolution, and therefore will show how a meaning for trust in international politics can be understood in context and through use.

Nixon’s grammar of trust included such words as ‘responsibility’, ‘intelligence’, ‘facts’, ‘information’ and ‘judgement’ and was founded on the idea of ‘trust the president’. Nixon’s use of trust had little to do with character or values but was instead based on the

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation (USSR), Washington, 11 May, 1971, *Soviet-American Relations: The Detente Years, 1969-1972* (Washington DC: State Dept., Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of the Historian, 2007), 349.

idealisation of information and facts, an acceptance of presidential responsibility (and thus prerogatives in decision-making), and conformity to Nixon's judgement as the president. He spoke often of trust and foreign policy in relation to the word 'responsibility' and with particular reference to his great responsibility for the safety of the nation as president. This use of trust reflected the administration's wider political language that attempted to portray Nixon as a great world leader who should be trusted with the responsibility of decision-making on US security. The chapter will first show how Nixon's use of trust in this way was related to his authoritarian approach to governance. Nixon attempted to centralise foreign policy decision-making within a small group of intimates and often ignored the traditional means of legitimating his decisions through the courting of Congress, instead attempting to validate his foreign policy choices by direct appeals to the public.<sup>2</sup> The chapter will examine how Nixon articulated the broader idea of deference to his presidential authority through the language of trust in the president.

The chapter will then illustrate how Nixon's use of trust took place in and was therefore shaped by an era in which there was scepticism in authority figures and a wide atmosphere of dissent. At the end of the 1960s the United States was in the midst of a moment of national crisis. Domestic issues of civil rights and the economy, and the Vietnam War divided the country and led to a 'credibility gap' in the government and traditional sources of authority, and an eruption of counter-cultural protest.<sup>3</sup> The US Congress was also beginning to question the Cold War consensus that had existed since the end of World War II and Nixon's public use of trust reflected this.<sup>4</sup>

Nixon's trust as 'trust the president' was also a reflection of his response to the imperatives of politics and national security in a nuclear age. The chapter will describe how Nixonian trust can be understood through Nixon's approach to nuclear weapons and specifically to the loss of the strategic superiority the US enjoyed in the early years of the Cold War. 'Trust the president', with its grammar of trust as judgement and responsibility

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<sup>2</sup> Francis J. Gavin, 'Nuclear Nixon: Ironies, Puzzles, and the Triumph of Realpolitik,' in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations 1969-1977* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> See for example William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in The Nixon Administration* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998); Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War*; Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*; Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*.

was part of Nixon's response to the necessities of leadership in an age of nuclear vulnerability.

The chapter will then provide an example of how Nixon used this particular meaning for trust in the public battle over passage of ABM deployment through a recalcitrant Senate early in his first term. On reaching office, Nixon had inherited an ABM system that was already controversial and contested. Protests from local anti-ABM groups at the proposed development sites had achieved national prominence and gained support from high profile scientists, anti-war protestors and Congress. The chapter will argue that Nixon viewed the passage of the Safeguard ABM programme through Congress as vital, not just for its strategic impact, but also as a symbol of his grasp on foreign policy decision-making and his domestic political capital. Nixon also viewed the deployment of ABM as an important component of the SALT negotiating process, which itself was a crucial part of Nixon's wider geopolitical goals and, as he was unable to end the war in Vietnam in his first years in office, an increasingly important justification for the 'great statesman' image he wanted to project. He therefore placed great significance on the authorisation of ABM in Congress.

However, by allowing domestic political imperatives to govern decision-making on ABM development, both in terms of the nature of the system and the public justifications he provided for its development, Nixon further undermined the system's coherence and thus weakened any arguments the administration could make for ABM based on its technical and strategic merits. This left the White House with limited avenues of justification for ABM deployment and the chapter will show how Nixon began to talk about trust as 'trust the president' in order to shut down public debate on the issue.

The chapter will finally demonstrate how the grammatical investigation into trust in this example reveals the irony at the heart of how Nixon talked about trust within the Safeguard debate. Nixon's argument that the public should simply 'trust the president' to make the correct decision regarding ABM was based on the idea that the president should be trusted because, as president, he could make more informed, rational strategic judgements in the nation's interests than they could. However, the chapter will show that it was the illogic of Nixon's decisions on ABM, often based on political expediency and personal pride, that in fact led to the conditions that would eventually make the 'trust the president' argument necessary.



## President Nixon's grammar of trust

In the 1960 presidential election between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, a Democratic Party campaign poster depicted the Republican candidate Nixon peering up from under heavy brows with an unflattering smile and famously posed the question 'Would YOU buy a used car from this man?' This poster asked voters to ask themselves whether they thought Richard Nixon was personally trustworthy, and gambled on voters answering 'no'. As Nixon ultimately lost the 1960 election, though only by a small margin, it would appear that the Democrats were right to gamble on this response.

Today, the idea that Nixon was not a man to be trusted is even more deeply ingrained. The popular image of the President – the schemer, user of back channel talks, creator of enemies lists and recorder of incriminating conversations – is one of someone who was not only untrustworthy but also untrusting. On multiple occasions he declared his distrust of even his closest foreign policy aides, including Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, commonly known as the National Security Advisor (NSA), Henry Kissinger ('I don't trust Henry, but I can use him'),<sup>5</sup> Secretary of State William Rogers, and Head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) delegation Gerard Smith, ('he's a small player and I don't trust him').<sup>6</sup> Further, Richard 'Tricky Dick' Nixon became a victim of his own distrust when he was forced to resign in disgrace over the Watergate scandal, the ultimate episode in presidential dishonour.<sup>7</sup>

However, despite this subsequent perception, during the 1968 election Nixon had campaigned on the basis of reducing the so called 'credibility gap' in government, and restoring confidence in the White House's ability to conduct foreign policy and specifically to honourably extricate the United States from the Vietnam War. Also, despite the enduring public perception of untrustworthiness and mistrust generally associated with President Nixon, the Nixon administration, after a series of questionable decisions and unexpected domestic opposition, turned to a particular use of trust in order to talk to a

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost, At the Center of Decision* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), 297.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 140.

<sup>7</sup> The 'Tricky Dick' nickname had its origins in the 1950 California Senate race against Helen Douglas where Nixon used anti-Communist sentiment as part of a smear campaign against his opponent, and was in turn labelled with the name which subsequently stuck throughout his career.

sceptical public about the Safeguard ABM system and gain its passage through Congress. Nixon's language of trust in this context was based on the idea that the public and Congress should stop questioning his decisions and simply 'trust the president' to make the correct choices in matters in which he had superior judgement and more information than they. Nixon's grammar of trust included such words as 'responsibility', 'intelligence', 'facts', 'information' and 'judgement'. Nixon spoke often of foreign policy with regards to the word 'responsibility', a word he regularly used in his public speech.<sup>8</sup> This use of trust was an indication of the administration's attempt to depict Nixon as the great world leader therefore could be trusted at home with the great responsibility of decision-making on US national security. Nixon's trust was thus based on the elevation of knowledge and facts, an acceptance of presidential responsibility for decision-making and the acceptance of Nixon's decisions as the president.

The following sections will show how this particular grammar of trust was shaped by Nixon's political persona and approach to foreign policy, US political culture, the contemporary political context and the unique demands on politics of the nuclear revolution.

### *Trust and leadership in the Nixon presidency*

Nixon was driven by the idea of being a great foreign policy president and his use of trust thus occurred within a wider attempt to centralise foreign policy decision-making in the executive office. On reaching office in 1969, the new president was determined to reshape the foreign and defence policy apparatus and transform the structure of decision-making in these areas.<sup>9</sup> Partly this attempt was because of the nature of the two men at the head of foreign policy – Nixon and his NSA Kissinger – whose personalities, as much of the

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<sup>8</sup> For example, in Nixon's first annual report to congress on foreign policy he used the word 'responsibility' twenty two times. Richard Nixon, Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970s, 18 February, 1970, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2835> The American Presidency Project. [Hereafter The American Presidency Project.] Last accessed 19 March, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> For a full account of this see Ambrose, *Nixon, Volume Two*; Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books/Faber, 1983).

literature describes, made them natural conspirators.<sup>10</sup> However, the type of policies they were attempting to implement also required a high level of centralised decision-making and flexibility. According to Melanson, détente and the policy of linkage in US relations with the Soviet Union ‘placed a premium on speed, dexterity, and manipulation.’<sup>11</sup> Acquiring the power to achieve this amount of presidential autonomy to make policy may well have been a difficult task at any time but was particularly challenging at this point, as Nixon was attempting to consolidate power in a period of resistance to current authority and reassertion of congressional power. It was also particularly difficult for a man like Nixon, who often alienated those he was trying to persuade and so arguably accelerated the demise of consensus within government.

The new president was, nevertheless, determined to reshape the foreign and defence policy apparatus and transform the structure of decision-making in these areas.<sup>12</sup> This was initially accomplished through the restoration of power to the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC had fallen in status over recent administrations as various presidents had preferred to conduct decision-making through less formal channels.<sup>13</sup> Nixon decided to change this and to reinstate the NSC as the prime decision-making body

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Paul Nitze recounts that in negotiations Nixon would rely on the Soviet interpreters to minimise the number of US participants knowing details and as a result they often had no proper records of the discussions. Even Gerard Smith was often not informed on what was happening at presidential level. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 304. There are many further accounts of these proclivities towards secrecy and subterfuge including: Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1993); Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician*; Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*; Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image*; Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect*; Richard Reeves, *President Nixon: Alone in the White House* (New York, London: Simon & Schuster, 2001). For Nixon's worries about and response to leaks see H. R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries, Inside the Nixon White House* (New York: G. P. Putnam Brothers, 1994), 181 and 189 and Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 386-390.

<sup>11</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*, 69. The strategy of ‘linkage’ in dealing with the Soviet Union was, according to Hanhimäki, based on ‘the idea one could create a web of relationships with the USSR and exchange, in effect, favors in one area (for example, the SALT negotiations) for those in another (say the Vietnam peace talks).’ Hanhimäki, ‘An Elusive Grand Design,’ in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*, 34. It would in theory make progress in any one area of US-Soviet relationship dependent on flexibility in other areas. Nixon explained this in a letter to Secretary of State Rogers in February 1969 stating ‘I am convinced that the great issues are fundamentally interrelated. I do not mean by this to establish artificial linkages between specific elements of one or another issue or between tactical steps that we may elect to take. But I do believe that crisis or confrontation in one place and real cooperation in another cannot long be sustained simultaneously.’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XII, Soviet Union January 1969-October 1970* (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2006), Document 10.

<sup>12</sup> For a full account of this see Ambrose, *Nixon, Volume Two*; Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books/Faber, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 146.

on national security issues within his administration, headed by his newly-installed NSA, Henry Kissinger. On 20 January, the day of his inauguration, President Nixon ordered National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDM) 1 and 2. NSDM 1 established the process of foreign policy research and decision-making that would be followed in the Nixon White House. NSDMs were officially recognised as the conduit through which the president would issue orders on national security, and National Security Study Memoranda (NSSMs) would be used to direct the research studies that were to be undertaken on national security issues and used as the basis of any decisions.<sup>14</sup> NSDM 2 established the NSC as the 'principal forum for consideration of policy issues requiring Presidential determination.'<sup>15</sup>

These two NSDMs ensured that the locus of national security agenda-setting, information dissemination and decision-making was placed firmly within the NSC and therefore the White House. Directives for action would come through the NSC and Kissinger, under the direction of the president, would set the NSC agenda. By managing the focus of studies conducted by various security agencies through the NSSM protocol, the NSC (under Kissinger's direction) would also dictate the policy priorities and perspectives of the administration towards national security issues, in the process sidelining the operational role and influence of the Secretary of State. In this way, Nixon did not attempt to legitimate his foreign policy decisions within the structure of government but instead, as Melanson describes, attempted to 'circumvent existing structures by creating a tightly controlled, highly centralised, and loyal foreign policy apparatus...to construct a loyal new minority within the White House to outmanoeuvre his enemies in the governmental old majority.'<sup>16</sup>

Nixon thus felt the need to capitalise domestically on any foreign policy successes to help him to consolidate his control over foreign policy. One way in which the administration attempted this was through pushing an image of Nixon as a strong world leader that could be trusted to make the difficult but right decisions. This was a dominant

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<sup>14</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 1, *Establishment of NSC Decision and Study Memoranda Series*, 20 January, 1969. [http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm\\_001.pdf](http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm_001.pdf) Last accessed 12 February, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 2, *Reorganization of the National Security Council System*, 20 January, 1969. <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nationalsecuritydecisionmemoranda.php> Last accessed 12 February, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*, 70-71.

theme in the White House internal correspondence, as Nixon was intent on being recognised as a powerful figure in world politics. Nixon hoped that this would all contribute to what Special Counsel to the President Charles Colson described to White House Chief of Staff Bob Haldeman as '[t]he process of instilling in the minds of people, the true image of the President as a world leader', an image of 'strength and dignity'.<sup>17</sup> In order to reinforce this message, the White House provided a team of speakers from the Cabinet and Congress, such as then Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Spiro Agnew, Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan), Secretary of Housing and Urban Development George Romney and many others with speeches about Nixon that reinforced the 'world leader' theme.<sup>18</sup>

This strategy can be seen throughout Nixon's first term. In a diary entry on 2 January 1971, Haldeman noted that the president wanted to focus on foreign policy public relations as 'our strongest point' and that he had the potential to become '*the* world leader [emphasis in original]', especially after the recent death of former French President Charles de Gaulle.<sup>19</sup> The administration also used this idea in its plans for the 1972 presidential election campaign. In a memorandum to Haldeman, Colson stated that the image of President Nixon as 'one of the great world leaders of this century' and a 'doer' president, 'can have a potent political effect and rubs off into the "trust" point which can be a crucial issue in the campaign'.<sup>20</sup> The framing of the 1972 Moscow Summit meeting, at which the ABM Treaty and the Interim Agreement on Offensive Weapons were signed, was also conducted in a manner intended to reinforce this perception of Nixon as what Colson again described as 'the serious role of world leader' leading up to the election.<sup>21</sup>

The political function of the image of Nixon as a strong world leader was acknowledged in a Haldeman 'Talking Paper' that argued that,

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<sup>17</sup> Charles Colson to Bob Haldeman, 4 June, 1971, H. R. Haldeman Files, Box 80, Charles Colson June 1971, Nixon Library.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, 230.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Colson to Haldeman, 31 May, 1972, Desmond J. Barker Files, Box 3, Summit Agreement Plans (2 of 4), Nixon Library.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Colson to Haldeman, 31 May, 1972, Charles W. Colson Files, Box 30, Moscow Trip (SALT) May 18-31 1972 (II) (2 of 2) See also further plans for maximising coverage of the Summit in Nixon Presidential Materials, Charles W. Colson Files Box 30, Moscow Trip (SALT) May 18-31 1972 (II) (1 of 2), Nixon Library.

[t]he other building area of overall long range importance is that of strong leadership of the President...We now have [a] very sound basis for working on the “man you can trust” theme, “major world leader” and the whole concept of “bold leadership.”

The key reason for making this connection, Haldeman emphasised, was that ‘it establishes the authority of the president’.<sup>22</sup> Nixon’s political message was thus one that focused on ideas of strong leadership, and Nixonian trust was strongly linked to authority and the responsibility of the office of the president. The White House message was that the American public should trust the president because he was a strong leader and ‘man you can trust’. Nixon’s grammar of trust was therefore connected to the image of strong and bold leadership, a serious man who could credibly inhabit the role of global statesman.

### *The contemporary political context*

Nixon’s public use of the language of trust was also shaped by the contemporary US political context. The newly installed Nixon administration was attempting to consolidate its hold on foreign policy-making within the context of a broader national crisis of credibility in government. As Jussi Hanhimäki writes, ‘Nixon and Kissinger could hardly have entered high public office at a time when American foreign policy was under greater criticism at home and abroad.’<sup>23</sup> In recent years the many psychological blows of the Tet Offensive, the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., demonstrations and riots in urban areas and on college campuses and the chaos of the 1968 Democratic Party Convention in Chicago had contributed to a demoralised society that was increasingly torn by both foreign and domestic issues.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the Soviet Union was closing the gap in strategic weaponry and the Nixon administration was unable to

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<sup>22</sup> Talking paper for the 3 o’clock meeting, undated (September 1971), H. R. Haldeman Files Box 153, Talking Papers 1971 (1 of 2), Nixon Library.

<sup>23</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimäki, ‘An Elusive Grand Design,’ in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*. Nixon had made the atmosphere of protest and civil disobedience a feature of his presidential campaign, portraying himself as the candidate who would restore law and order to the nation and eliminate the credibility gap that had come to be associated with Lyndon Johnson’s administration. In his first appearance on *Meet the Press* in December 1968, Nixon’s Director of Communications Herb Klein was clear on the soon-to-be President’s priorities, ‘we feel that one of the first things that is necessary is to regain faith in the American government, both from our own people and from abroad.’ Herbert G. Klein, *Making it Perfectly Clear: An Inside Account of Nixon’s Love-Hate Relationship with the Media* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War*, 55.

maintain US strategic superiority through the usual means of increased defence spending on nuclear weapons because of the public's anti-military mood.<sup>25</sup>

The general atmosphere of protest and anti-militarism was reflected in the actions of Congress, which also began to reassert itself and to question the decisions of the executive branch with regards to foreign policy. The Cold War consensus that had sustained foreign policy making for the past two decades was collapsing and, as Henry Kissinger noted, the Nixon administration now 'faced not only the dislocations of a war but the need to articulate a new foreign policy for a new era.'<sup>26</sup> Nixon's use of trust in his rhetoric thus did not speak of trust with regard to personal trustworthiness but rather to trust Nixon as 'The President'. As illustrated earlier, there were historical problems with attempting to portray Nixon as personally trustworthy, and talking of personal trust to a public in the midst of domestic conflict and Vietnam would have been challenging. However, the administration was still able to make use of trust by associating it, not with Nixon himself as a person but with 'Nixon the President'. The White House did not argue that Americans should trust their president because of his trustworthy nature; it declared that he should be trusted simply because he was the president. Nixon thus located the basis of his request for trust on a longstanding tradition of American deference to the office of the president, and situated himself within a legacy of historical trust in the institution that preceded and would hopefully supplant the contemporary crisis of credibility in current authorities.

In an era when the American people were divided and disillusioned and talking about trust with regards to current leaders and institutions was problematic, Nixon connected himself - as president - to the memories of past presidents such as President Woodrow Wilson, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and President Kennedy. By doing so, he de-contextualised the meaning of trusting the office of the president from contemporary political debates and located it in an earlier American history and political culture.

This is apparent in several public White House communications that use the word 'trust' and in which the word 'Nixon' is notably absent, the exhortation is not to trust

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<sup>25</sup> David Tal, "'Absolutes' and 'Stages' in the Making and Application of Nixon's SALT Policy," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 5 (2013): 1096.

<sup>26</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War*, 45.

‘President Nixon’ but to trust ‘the President’ as an office in itself.<sup>27</sup> An acknowledgement of this can be seen in a public relations strategy memorandum from speechwriter Ken Khachigian to speechwriter Patrick Buchanan before the 1972 election. In the memorandum Khachigian proposed once again to leverage the institutionalised trust in the office of the president.

Whether or not they do, my guess is that the American public *wants* to trust their President [emphasis in original]. Thus, we must once again make use of — in the Nixon presence — the commodity which we monopolise in the campaign — the Presidency.

In order to do so he suggested that

[v]irtually every minute of airtime we purchase for serious RN statements should be televised in the White House – the Oval Office, the Lincoln sitting room, the Roosevelt room, the Cabinet room. Every effort must be made to identify the White House with Richard Nixon.<sup>28</sup>

Nixon’s attempt to access the historical legacy of defence to the institution with reference to the past was also evident in a highly publicised speech he gave from the Oval Office on 30 April 1970 to announce the incursion of American troops into Cambodia. In this address Nixon noted that

[i]n this room, Woodrow Wilson made the great decisions which led to victory in World War I. Franklin Roosevelt made the decisions which led to our victory in World War II. Dwight D. Eisenhower made decisions which ended the war in Korea and avoided war in the Middle East. John F. Kennedy, in his finest hour, made the great decision which removed Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba and the Western Hemisphere.

He then added that,

between those decisions and this decision there is a difference that is very fundamental. In those decisions, the American people were not assailed by

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<sup>27</sup> The idea of the intrinsic inscrutability of the office of the president was perhaps most notoriously visible in the Nixon interviews conducted by David Frost in 1977, when in response to a question that asked if there ever existed certain situations in which the president could rightly do something illegal, Nixon made the infamous response: ‘Or when the president does it, that means that it is not illegal.’ 6 April, 1977. Richard Nixon, ‘If the President does it that means that it is not illegal,’ extract from the Nixon-Frost interviews. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejvyDn1TPr8>. Last accessed 17 April, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Khachigian to Patrick Buchanan, 13 January, 1972, Kenneth L. Khachigian Files Box 8, Pat Buchanan I, 8 May 1970 thru 30 Sep 1971 (1 of 2) Richard Nixon Library, Yorba Linda, California (hereafter Nixon Library).



counsels of doubt and defeat from some of the most widely known opinion leaders of the Nation.<sup>29</sup>

Nixon thus linked his appeal for trust to the decisions of a chain of past presidents who had to make similar difficult choices, and in doing so attempted to frame his own actions as president with reference to the historical legacy of past heroic actions and gain credibility from the association. The appeal was also based on the premise that decisions made in the White House had a particular quality that came from their location at the centre of American politics. Nixon suggested that, by being made within the Oval Office, the idea being proposed was deserving of the public's unquestioning acceptance, or as Hal Bochin described it 'the idea that the location where a decision was made should count for more than its quality.'<sup>30</sup>

By doing this, Nixon hoped to reach out to the ordinary American, who he felt wanted to support their president's decisions and actions. In this respect Nixon's talk of trust is redolent of his famous 'Silent Majority' speech on the War in Vietnam in which he reached out to the wider population of America that he judged were quietly supportive of his actions on Vietnam but drowned out by the vocal protests of an engaged minority, the 'youth' as Nixon described them, and a partisan media. In this speech, Nixon attempted to bypass these opponents and made a request for support 'to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans'.<sup>31</sup>

At a time when public perception of presidential authority and integrity was at a low, it may seem paradoxical that Nixon would use this type of request to presidential authority but it was an evocation of a time before the contemporary domestic division, before the war in Vietnam and indeed in part before some of his audience were born, to a legacy of the power of the office that would supersede current unrest. Nixonian trust as authority, responsibility and leadership was thus both influenced by and a means of

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<sup>29</sup> Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia, 30 April, 1970, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2490>. Last accessed 12 November, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Hal W. Bochin, *Richard Nixon, Rhetorical Strategist* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 65. Another comparison can be made to Nixon's 'Silent Majority' speech in November 1969 when he compared his speech on Vietnam to one of President Woodrow Wilson's, saying '[f]ifty years ago, in this room and at this very desk, President Woodrow Wilson spoke words which caught the imagination of a war-weary world. He said: "This is the war to end war."' Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, 3 November, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2303>. Last accessed 27 February, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, 3 November, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2303>. Last accessed 27 February, 2014.

negotiating through the contemporary political context and Nixon's place in US political culture.

### *Nixonian trust and the nuclear revolution*

Nixon's grammar of trust was also shaped by his particular response to the nuclear era and his perception of the imperatives placed by nuclear weapons on security and foreign policy. Nixon's (and Kissinger's) view of the international in the era of nuclear weapons placed a particular imperative on the administration's use of the word 'trust' in public speech which reflected their wider view of the international as a realm of 'Realpolitik'.

While Nixon's priority in office was always foreign policy, both Nixon and Kissinger were sceptical of the merits of arms control, and at the time all foreign policy was overshadowed by the war in Vietnam as well as the situation in the Middle East.<sup>32</sup> Nixon, though acknowledging the significance of nuclear weapons as 'extraordinarily important' according to Francis Gavin, saw them as operating within a broader game of power politics and that therefore 'they did not fundamentally alter more powerful political forces.'<sup>33</sup> 'History makes it clear that wars result not so much from arms, or even from arms races', Nixon declared in February 1969, but rather 'from underlying political

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<sup>32</sup> 'Priorities for Nixon Administration: A Look at Questions Shaping Changes in Washington' *New York Times*, 15 November, 1968. The Foreign Policy agenda can be seen in the issues covered by the NSSMs sent out in Nixon's first month in office, NSSM 1 was titled 'The Situation in Vietnam' and a further three studies were commissioned in the first month on the topic, significantly more than any other issue, none were issued on ABM or SALT.

<sup>33</sup> Gavin, 'Nuclear Nixon,' in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*, 127. This is something that would be disputed by several accounts of the time, including Nixon and Kissinger's own. See Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), 1253-1254; Nixon, RN, 617-618 for their accounts of the importance of SALT. For a further discussion of the differences within the literature on this point see Asaf Siniver, *Nixon, Kissinger and U.S. Foreign Policy Making: The Machinery of Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 43. Strobe Talbott describes Nixon's approach to arms control as one that changed over his term in office: 'Nixon was at first mistrustful, tending to look upon SALT as something to be done only if the Russians proved helpful on other matters, like Vietnam of the Middle East. But for assorted reasons Nixon eventually came to press as hard for a SALT agreement as Johnson had pressed for the talks themselves.' Talbott, *Cold Dawn*, 45. This still asks the question of what the assorted reasons were-much of the documentation shows Nixon as most anxious to gain domestic mileage out of the Moscow summit, as Raymond L. Garthoff noted '[p]ersonal domestic political and international political motivations were mixed, and it was not always possible to identify which would be (or even after the event, which had been) dominant. Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994), 30. This will be discussed further later in the chapter.

differences and political problems.’<sup>34</sup> In a briefing to Congress in June 1972, Kissinger asserted that the president ‘was convinced that agreements dealing with questions of armaments in isolation do not in fact produce lasting inhibitions on military competition because they contribute little to the kind of stability that makes crises less likely.’<sup>35</sup> In fact, as Gavin suggests, neither Nixon nor Kissinger ‘saw the nuclear arms race as the cause or key factor in the Cold War with the Soviet Union...geopolitical competition, and not the arms race, remained the core driver of international politics.’<sup>36</sup>

However, Nixon and Kissinger were both aware that the domestic environment was such that the level of spending needed to regain strategic superiority was impossible and were concerned that if no movement on bilateral arms control was made with the Soviet Union, Congress could impose unilateral arms control measures by cutting spending.<sup>37</sup> The Soviet Union had been closing the gap in strategic weaponry and the Nixon administration was unable to maintain traditional US strategic superiority through increased defence spending on nuclear weapons because of the public mood of anti-military spending.<sup>38</sup> Nixon regretted the loss in strategic superiority that the US had enjoyed in the past and often referred with envy to the five to one lead in strategic weaponry that President Kennedy had possessed during the Cuban Missile Crisis., According to Gavin, Nixon ‘wanted a return to nuclear superiority, but because of domestic politics and the world situation, it was simply not on the cards.’<sup>39</sup>

Both Nixon and Kissinger also had little time for nuclear arms control as a goal in itself. They instead regarded any arms control as useful mainly as a means to greater geopolitical ends, as part of their strategy of linkage. Nuclear arms control issues would in time become highly important to Nixon to bolster his domestic prestige and legacy, but at the time of the ABM debate he did not consider the issue as being important in itself. Therefore the details of debates over ABM radars or interceptors, the minutiae that were the lifeblood of arms control professionals, were dismissed as essentially immaterial.

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<sup>34</sup> In David Tal, ““Absolutes” and “Stages” in the Making and Application of Nixon’s SALT Policy,” *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 5 (2013): 1094.

<sup>35</sup> In Gerard Smith, *Doubletalk: The Story of SALT I by The Chief American Negotiator* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1980), 26.

<sup>36</sup> Francis J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America’s Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 105.

<sup>37</sup> See Smith, *Doubletalk*, 29-30 in which he describes this as making ‘arms control capital out of domestic consideration.’

<sup>38</sup> Tal, ““Absolutes” and “Stages”,’: 1096.

<sup>39</sup> Gavin, ‘Nuclear Nixon,’ in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*, 128.

Nixon privately declared: 'I don't give a damn about SALT; I just couldn't care less'.<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that Nixon did not care about SALT in any respect, but that in his eyes its importance was connected to achieving other foreign policy goals and as a mean to open up the 'era of negotiation' that he had promised in his inaugural address.<sup>41</sup> The arms control debate was not just about arms control itself, its strategic or technical merits, but what it could achieve as a tool in international geopolitics and, importantly, what it represented in the domestic struggle for authority and partisan political gains.<sup>42</sup>

For Nixon, therefore, talking about trust in an age of nuclear vulnerability and in relation to nuclear weapons was to talk about power, and his use of trust is therefore best understood within this context. Nixon's response to the imperatives of nuclear governance was expressed in his use of trust as related to responsibility. In a time in which the president had the ultimate responsibility for decisions on the security and very existence of the United States, Nixonian trust was partly a request for acknowledgement of that responsibility and the presidential prerogatives in decision-making that this would entail. This is clear in the statement Nixon made when announcing the deployment plan for the Safeguard ABM system in March 1969 where he affirmed that the 'gravest responsibility which I bear as President of the United States is for the security of the Nation. Our nuclear forces defend not only ourselves but our allies as well.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Gavin also quotes Nixon as describing the debate over missile interceptors as 'just of no consequence', saying 'I don't think it makes a hell of a lot of difference'. Gavin, 'Nuclear Nixon,' in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*, 109. David Greenberg also claims that Nixon 'never learned the fine points of arms control.' David Greenberg, 'Nixon as Statesman: The Failed Campaign,' in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*, 57. Kissinger also often exhibited a lack of interest in the finer details of arms control negotiation with the Soviet Union, as seen in his careless answers on topic such as Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) and ABM options in his discussions with Dobrynin, what William Bundy has described as an 'extraordinarily sloppy negotiating performance.' Bundy, *A Tangled Web*, 172. For more on this from the perspective of the negotiators see Smith, *Doubletalk*, 228.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Nixon, Inaugural Address, 20 January, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1941> Last accessed 27 January, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> For example Kissinger's attitude that victory for the administration on ABM was needed to 'break the back of this generation of Democratic leaders'. Kissinger quoted in Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 280. Garthoff has argued that while the SALT negotiations became the 'flagship of détente, as well as the crowning achievement of Nixon's first term', both Nixon and Kissinger nonetheless saw SALT as 'a political enterprise, with potential domestic and international gains if it were carefully controlled.' Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 147.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Nixon, Statement on Deployment of the Antiballistic Missile System, 14 March, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1952>. Last accessed 27 August, 2014.

The following section of the chapter will analyse a particular example of Nixon's public speech on trust and nuclear weapons and provide an example of the rhetorical relationship between the president's meaning for trust, the contemporary political climate and Nixon's conception of the conduct of international politics in a nuclear age. It will illustrate how Nixon turned to a specific use of trust that can best be understood through locating it within this particular context. This will be conducted through an analysis of the decisions on the deployment of the Safeguard ABM programme and subsequent public battle for passage of the programme through Congress in Nixon's first term.

### **Nixon's use of trust in the Safeguard debate**

On inauguration in 1969, Nixon inherited the Johnson administration's plans for the deployment of an ABM system called Sentinel, which by this time was already a controversial issue. The origins of Sentinel were contested and characterised by a lack of scientific discussion at decision-making level and the regular dismissal of expert technical opinion in favour of political expediency.<sup>44</sup> In 1961, the newly inaugurated President John F. Kennedy and his Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara decided against deploying the ABM system after receiving advice from the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) and ARPA.<sup>45</sup> As ABM testing continued during the early and mid 1960s and the technology improved, McNamara, advised by these groups who argued that the technology was incomplete and that an ABM system would be destabilising, continued to counsel President Kennedy, and later President Johnson, against deployment.<sup>46</sup> During these years, President Johnson generally deferred to his Secretary of Defense on this issue and remained largely uninvolved in the decision-making process on ABM.<sup>47</sup>

However, by 1966 pressure was increasing on the President from the Joint Chiefs and from hawks in Congress to reconsider deployment. This was reinforced by the

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<sup>44</sup> Sanford Lakoff and Herbert F. York, *A Shield in Space? Technology, Politics, and the Strategic Defense Initiative* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 55. This book also contains a further discussion of the early Congressional debate on ABM which space constraints prohibit here. See also Ernest J. Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy, Technology in Search of a Mission* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 28; Morton H. Halperin, 'The Decision to Deploy the ABM: Bureaucratic and Domestic Politics in the Johnson Administration,' *World Politics* 25, no. 1 (1972): 62-95.

<sup>45</sup> Gregg Herken, *Cardinal Choices: Presidential Science Advising from the Atom Bomb to SDI* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 160.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>47</sup> Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*, 123.

knowledge gained by American spy satellites that the Soviet Union was building its own ABM system ‘Galosh’ around Moscow, as well as updating air defence systems around Tallinn.<sup>48</sup> This fact, combined with the ongoing improvements in technology during research and development testing, provided ABM advocates in Congress and the Joint Chiefs with a powerful argument for deployment and ABM became an increasingly political issue within the administration.<sup>49</sup> In 1967 Johnson was still considering running for re-election and he was concerned by the idea of an ‘ABM gap’ similar to the infamous ‘missile gap’ of the late 1950s, being used against him by a Republican opponent.<sup>50</sup>

While McNamara, the State Department and the President’s science advisors in PSAC remained resolutely against the idea of ABM, President Johnson began to be swayed by the political claims for deployment and eventually overruled McNamara’s objections pending the outcome of planned talks with the Soviet Union. When Johnson’s meeting with Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin in Glassboro in June of 1967 failed to create any promise of successful talks on this issue, McNamara had to reluctantly admit he had lost the battle and began to prepare for the requisition of funds and plans for deployment of a US ABM system.<sup>51</sup>

The White House announced initial details of the light ABM system on 1 November 1967. This deployment plan included ten sites protecting mainly metropolitan areas including Boston, New York, Chicago, Seattle and Detroit.<sup>52</sup> Army survey teams began searching for suitable sites at these cities immediately and construction began at the first site at Sharpner’s Pond in Boston at the end of 1968. Throughout this period, the Army Corps engineers held public hearings in a number of the proposed site cities. As residents became aware of the nearby locations of ABM systems, opposition slowly began

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<sup>48</sup> David C. Phillips, *BMD and the Senate*, System Development Corporation Report SP-34629, November 1969. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/701799.pdf> Last accessed 14 April, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*, 117. See also Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, 83.

<sup>50</sup> Lakoff and York, *A Shield in Space*, 60. In 1967 the Republican National Committee released a booklet called ‘The Missile Defense Question: Is LBJ Right?’ and the two potential Republican candidates, Nixon and Governor of California Ronald Reagan, both publicly spoke about the issue, see Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*, 125.

<sup>51</sup> Herken, *Cardinal Choices*, 162. Ernest Yanarella has argued that, ultimately, President Johnson’s decision to deploy an ABM system was based neither on technology nor strategy but rather on ‘the political necessities of election year politics.’ Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*, 142. This sentiment was also expressed at the time by highly disappointed members of PSAC who described the proposed ABM system deployment as not so much ‘anti-Chinese’ as ‘anti-Republican’, Herken, *Cardinal Choices*, 163.

<sup>52</sup> The full list of sites were Boston, Chicago, Grand Forks Air Force Base North Dakota, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Salt Lake City, Detroit, Seattle, Hawaii, New York and Albany Georgia. Three further sites were announced in the following May: San Francisco, Los Angeles and Sedalia Missouri.

to grow and was amplified by protests from local congressman and journalistic comment about ‘bombs in the backyard’.<sup>53</sup>

This increasing public awareness was reinforced by the protests of the anti-ABM scientific community, which began to coordinate with local resident communities.<sup>54</sup> Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) sent a letter of protest to Nixon’s new Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, urging a freeze on ABM deployment, and a first debate was held in Congress on the topic on 31 January, eleven days after the inauguration of President Nixon.<sup>55</sup>

The general atmosphere of protest and anti-militarism of the late 1960s inspired and enabled anti-ABM scientists, activists and local politicians.<sup>56</sup> Scientists organised a one-day stoppage of research on 4 March to protest against what they termed as government misuse of technology. This began in the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) but spread to other organisations and was conducted in a total of thirty universities.<sup>57</sup> The accompanying statement released by members of the MIT faculty asserted that the actions of the government in Vietnam had ‘shaken our confidence in its ability to make wise and humane decisions’ and they therefore called on scientists and engineers throughout the country to ‘express our determined opposition to ill-advised and hazardous projects such as the ABM system’.<sup>58</sup>

On 28 February the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Disarmament announced that it would hold a series of public hearings on the issue of ABM.<sup>59</sup> Then, on 7 March, the Committee released a bipartisan report urging the White House to delay

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<sup>53</sup> Lakoff and York, *A Shield in Space*, 62. See also Thomas A. Halsted, ‘Lobbying Against the ABM 1967-1970,’ *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 1971, 26; Phillips, *BMD and the Senate*, 14. Newspaper and magazine editorials such as ‘Anti-Missile Site Chosen’ (Editorial), *Los Angeles Times*, 19 December, 1968, and David Inglis, ‘H-Bombs in the Back Yard,’ *Saturday Review*, 21 December, 1968, became more common.

<sup>54</sup> In Chicago, the ‘Northern Illinois Citizen’s against ABM’ filed a lawsuit against construction, as did the ‘Bainbridge Site Opposition Committee’ in Seattle, and further committees were organised in Los Angeles, Detroit, Honolulu and Salt Lake City that began to raise awareness and lobby Congress. This high degree of public sentiment gained a focal point at an Army public briefing in Boston on 29 January 1969. The local protest group, ‘The New England Citizen’s Committee on ABM’, organised a well-publicised protest at this meeting during which 1500 attendees engaged in a highly-charged, televised debate with Army representatives. Halsted, *Lobbying Against the ABM*, 27.

<sup>55</sup> Halsted, *Lobbying Against the ABM*; Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*.

<sup>56</sup> Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*, 156.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Fighting the “Misuse of Knowledge”,’ *New York Times*, 9 February, 1969.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Against the Misuse of Science-An Appeal by M.I.T Scientists,’ *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 1969.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Missile Hearings Slated,’ *New York Times*, 1 March, 1969.

deployment of the system until after initiating arms control talks with the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> High-profile public opponents of the system such as Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AR), Senator John Cooper (R-KY) and Senator Albert Gore (D-TN), argued repeatedly in Senate hearings and in media appearances that the system would have a destabilising effect, be technologically unfeasible and that it was politically motivated.<sup>61</sup> The weapons system would require a majority vote in the Senate (it was expected to pass the House of Representatives without difficulty) and anti-ABM senators were claiming a bipartisan majority would vote against it.<sup>62</sup> These objections to the system from senators were not only based on strategic or foreign policy issues, but also supported by arguments from local groups. These groups claimed that the ABM sites near cities would be unsightly, restrict television access, and depress property prices and local commercial development.<sup>63</sup>

While he had originally decided to continue President Johnson's Sentinel programme without change, on reaching office Nixon soon recognised that this would not be politically advantageous, and so instead decided to reassess the current deployment plans. On 6 February, Secretary Laird announced that he was halting the Sentinel ABM programme pending a review by the Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard and the Director of Defense Research and Engineering (DDR&E). This review was conducted, not to address the administration's strategic and technical concerns on the current programme, but, according to Henry Kissinger, 'in order to pull the teeth of public criticism' and to 'make us appear thoughtful.'<sup>64</sup> In fact, in private discussions the Nixon administration remained largely positive about ABM deployment and did not recognise the need for a review of current deployment plans based on strategic concerns. At an NSC meeting on 19 February there was a general consensus on the advantages of continuing with an ABM deployment of some sort. Members agreed that 'stable deterrence' would necessitate both

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<sup>60</sup> This group included Republican Senators John Cooper (R-Kentucky) Jacob K. Javits (R-New York) and Charles Percy (R-Illinois), overall the opposition within Congress was relatively bipartisan in nature. 'Senators Appeal to White House to Delay Sentinel,' *New York Times*, 8 March, 1969.

<sup>61</sup> 'Nixon Aid Denies Sentinel Imperils Atom Arms Talks,' *New York Times*, 7 March, 1969, 'Missiles Decision Termed Political,' *New York Times*, 24 March, 1969.

<sup>62</sup> The opposition claimed that 53 negative votes could be predicted on Sentinel, out of that 53 there were 23 Democrat and 21 Republican solid no votes, 'Foes of Sentinel in Senate Claim Majority Against it,' *New York Times*, 26 February, 1969.

<sup>63</sup> 'Great Sentinel Debate,' *New York Times*, 13 February, 1969. The importance of these domestic and local issues was exemplified by Democratic Senator Henry Jackson, one of ABM's strongest supporters who nonetheless strongly objected to any deployment in his home state of Washington. Bundy, *A Tangled Web*, 88.

<sup>64</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 205.



the maintenance of US advantage in Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) and deploying ABM to counter Soviet ICBMs. The advantage of ABM as a potential bargaining tool for future arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union was also discussed and agreed upon. The new Director of the ACDA, Gerard Smith, was a lone voice of dissent, but Nixon dismissed his concerns as well as the technical objections of scientists with the declaration that '[t]he intellectual community is getting hysterical about ABM.'<sup>65</sup>

Nixon understood, however, that due to the current political context, the Sentinel system as proposed by McNamara would be unlikely to pass the Senate, and that even a modified system would encounter great political difficulties. The combination of public protest and Congress' reassertion of its rights to challenge the president on foreign policy led Nixon and Kissinger to view the ABM programme as not just strategically important but also politically significant in two key ways. Firstly, as Kissinger described, ABM was 'a symbol of a basic schism' in the country.<sup>66</sup> The administration viewed the contest over ABM as reflecting deeper, national political currents. In Bob Haldeman's diaries, he described ABM as the 'first crisis' of Nixon's presidency, one which had politically 'explosive potential' and therefore needed to be carefully managed.<sup>67</sup> Secondly, Nixon also viewed the ABM as a litmus test of his power over foreign policy decision-making within government. According to Robert Dallek, for Nixon personally, ABM was less about the system itself and more a measure of his ability to 'dominate the Congress'. By forcing through the ABM programme, Nixon would show 'that he and not Congress would be making the big foreign policy decisions.'<sup>68</sup>

Bryce Harlow, Nixon's Assistant for Congressional Relations, outlined the political climate on ABM in a memorandum for the president which stated that,

[c]areful analysis of the immediate situation in the Senate strongly indicates: 1) the ABM system advanced by LBJ has no chance whatsoever; 2) even a modified system can now only be passed with maximum effort, including all out Presidential participation.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> NSC Meeting Minutes, 19 February, 1969, NSC Files Box H-109, Nixon Library.

<sup>66</sup> Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 137.

<sup>67</sup> Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, 38-40.

<sup>68</sup> Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 137.

<sup>69</sup> Bryce Harlow to the President, Congressional Status of ABM Issue, NSC Files, Box 843, ABM-MIRV, ABM Memoranda [March 1969]. Nixon Library.

Thus the impetus for review of the system and the final findings of that review were shaped by the fact that the administration viewed the importance of ABM as symbolic rather than strategic and the success of ABM as a measure of the administration's potential to regain control of foreign policy in a time of resistance.

### *From Sentinel to Safeguard*

In early March of 1969, President Nixon received and approved the review report from Deputy Secretary Packard and DDR&E, which recommended that the administration continue with a modified ABM deployment. On 14 March, Nixon announced his decision to the nation, commencing with an acknowledgment of how controversial the issue had become:

Last year a program, the Sentinel antiballistic missile program, was adopted. That program, as all listeners on television and radio and readers of newspapers know, has been the subject of very strong debate and controversy over the past few months.

The president then outlined his plans for deployment of a 'substantially modified' version described as a 'Safeguard program' which he stated would have three aims:

It is a safeguard against any attack by the Chinese Communists that we can foresee over the next ten years.

It is a safeguard of our deterrent system, which is increasingly vulnerable due to the advances that have been made by the Soviet Union since the year 1967 when the Sentinel program was first laid out.

It is a safeguard against any irrational or accidental attack that might occur of less than massive magnitude which might be launched from the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup>

He further explained that the new Safeguard programme would no longer focus on thin area defence but that instead the emphasis would be on protecting the second-strike capability of the United States by defending more offensive missile sites thereby maintaining the US deterrent. He justified the move away from area defence as the result of the limitations of any missile defence system's technical capability to provide complete protection, as well as the provocative and destabilising nature of city defence which could

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<sup>70</sup> Richard Nixon, The President's News Conference, 4 March, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2444> Last accessed 12 March, 2013.

encourage the Soviet Union to believe in the credibility of US first strike intentions.<sup>71</sup> Later that day, Packard announced the details of the initial Safeguard deployment. This would consist of up to twelve sites in phased deployment with a larger number of these sites protecting US Minuteman installations. The first two sites to begin construction in phase I of the deployment, which the initial request for funds from Congress would cover, would be located around the Malmstrom and Grand Forks missile bases in Montana and North Dakota. Further missile sites as well as limited area defence were to begin in later deployment phases that would be under a system of annual administrative and Congressional review.<sup>72</sup>

After announcing plans for the newly renamed Safeguard ABM system, the administration began to prepare for the public battle to secure its passage through Congress that year. This would be the first of several annual debates on the topic and the most contentious. By the end of 1969, the administration would undergo within the Senate what Robert David Johnson has described as ‘the most exhaustive attack in U.S. history against a weapons system, and one of the longest debates on any issue in the postwar era.’<sup>73</sup>

#### *The inconsistencies of the first Safeguard debate*

The central problem of the Safeguard deployment that Nixon proposed in 1969 was that the many justifications he offered for its deployment were not wholly consistent either with each other, or with the nature of the planned system. This was due to the fact that the proposed programme was a product of compromises between competing vested administration interests and sops to outside political pressures.<sup>74</sup> This led to a deployment

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<sup>71</sup> Kissinger sent Nixon a summary of options and justifications based on the Department of Defense report, raising the issue of whether to emphasise the Soviet or the Chinese aspect of deployment: ‘We could justify the deployment as a defense against China with the defense of our retaliatory forces as an add-on. Alternatively we could justify the deployment as a defense of our retaliatory forces and treat the defense against China as an add-on.’ Henry A. Kissinger to the President, 5 March, 1969, NSC Files Box 843, ABM Memoranda, Nixon Library.

<sup>72</sup> Department of Defense News Release No 184-69, 14 March, 1969 in David C. Phillips, *Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution of the Decision-making Process*, paper SP-3462 for the System Development Corporation. [www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=AD0701799](http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=AD0701799) Last accessed 12 November, 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 151.

<sup>74</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, ‘Domestic Politics Shaped Nixon's Decision on ABM,’ *Los Angeles Times*, 18 March, 1969.

plan that was beset with contradictions. The irony of Safeguard was that by allowing the system's design to be influenced by political rather than strategic aims, the Nixon White House ended up with one whose inherent strategic contradictions made it politically vulnerable. In his memoirs Kissinger admitted that the move away from area defence was

a purely political decision; it was designed to reassure arms control advocates fearful lest a heavy defense of our population would appear threatening to the Soviets. Our dilemma was that we could sell an ABM program to the Congress apparently only by depriving it of military effectiveness against our principal adversary.<sup>75</sup>

In Nixon's memoirs he described the ABM opposition through the framing of public and elite perceptions of the Vietnam War. While he acknowledged that there were some legitimate technical objections to the ABM that influenced some moderates and conservatives, he claimed that the Vietnam War had 'soured the debate' and 'convinced the liberals that America suffered from too belligerent a posture and made them determined to curb our military spending.'<sup>76</sup> At a Cabinet meeting on 20 March, Nixon reiterated the necessity of having ABM as part of the requirement for military superiority to create a strong base for negotiations with the Soviet Union. He dismissed the 'intellectuals' and their objections to ABM stating that, '[i]t's only us nonintellectuals who understand what the game is all about'.<sup>77</sup> However, this framing was not completely accurate. Much of the opposition to ABM deployment was bipartisan in nature and based on genuine technological, domestic and strategic issues with the proposed system and its ostensible rationalisations.

Kissinger also let the administration off the hook for the failings of Safeguard in his depiction of the ABM battle by painting a picture of a White House with limited options, fighting against a highly partisan, politically motivated opposition. He dismissed the different challenges to the Nixon Safeguard system as 'various, passionate and not necessarily consistent'.<sup>78</sup> In his retelling of the events, he cast the story in a partisan light, and conferred leading opposition roles solely on prominent Democrats such as Senator Edward Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey and Senator Albert Gore (D-Tenn).<sup>79</sup> Kissinger gave

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<sup>75</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 208.

<sup>76</sup> Nixon, *RN*, 416.

<sup>77</sup> This is reported in Haldeman's diary on Thursday 20 March, 1969, Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, 42.

<sup>78</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 206.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-8, Nixon in his memoirs also speaks of the 'powerful liberal forces [in the Senate] headed by Teddy Kennedy'. Nixon, *RN*, 417.

no mention to any Republican opponent of the programme, although there were several. One of the leading and earliest challengers to ABM in the Senate was Senator John Cooper, a Republican from Kentucky, and Republican Senators Jacob Javits (New York), Charles Percy (Illinois), Senator Edward Brooke (Massachusetts) and Senator Clifford Case (New Jersey), among several others joined him. Also, one of Safeguard and ABM's staunchest public supporters was the hawkish Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson, a Democrat from Washington. While it would be naive to say that party politics played no part in the ABM debate, both support for and opposition to the Safeguard programme was reasonably bi-partisan in nature, certainly more than Kissinger's account would have one believe.

Paul Nitze, the highly influential author of NSC-68 who would become a member of the US delegation to the SALT talks, took a less partisan tone but also believed that the opposition was not at all based on the merits of the system itself.<sup>80</sup> He later stated,

[t]he more I looked into it the more I believed that the basis of the anti-ABM campaign was to be found in the country's disenchantment with the Vietnam War, in the widespread alienation from the government of former supporters of the nuclear defense program, and in the desire of many to wish away the problems of national security.<sup>81</sup>

While criticisms of the new Safeguard programme certainly occurred within a political context that amplified and gave them wider meaning, this did not mean that the criticisms were in themselves unfounded, and that there were not valid questions to be asked about what Gerard Smith labelled as Safeguard's 'questionable fitness for its mission.'<sup>82</sup> As already illustrated in this chapter, the war in Vietnam was indeed a factor in shaping public attitudes towards Safeguard and military spending in general – the MIT scientists had acknowledged this fact in their statement released on 4 March – but this did not mean that all criticism of the system was entirely politically motivated. Wrapped up in the doubtless important political trappings of the contest, Nixon nonetheless declined to address the actual criticisms that were also part of the debate.

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<sup>80</sup> Paul Nitze was an important voice on arms control issues throughout the period in question, he was also later a co-founder of the influential Team B think tank and the chief negotiator of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and Special Advisor to President Reagan and the Secretary of State on Arms Control.

<sup>81</sup> Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 294.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, *Doubletalk*, 208.

One of these criticisms concerned the lack of scientific consultation and the White House's dismissal of any contrary technical opinion on the subject. This lack of scientific discussion was an ongoing feature of the ABM programme. Johnson's eventual decision to deploy the Sentinel ABM system was taken against the advice of his scientific advisors, and PSAC were not invited to have any input into the Nixon Pentagon review that produced the amended Safeguard plan in 1969.

Packard and others at the Department of Defense (DOD) sought little technical expertise from the various scientific advisory bodies to the administration. The Doty Group, an informal body of advisors to the NSC made up of scientists and arms control experts, were shocked when Nixon announced the new plan for Safeguard in March before they had a chance to voice their opinions.<sup>83</sup> According to Richard Garwin, a member of the group from the IBM Corporation; '[t]hey announced it without having done the responsible thing: asking experts in the government about it.'<sup>84</sup> This became publicly known after the *Washington Post* released a news story to accompany its coverage of the President's speech based on an administration leak that White House scientific advisors had been kept out of the decision-making process.<sup>85</sup>

In his memoirs, President Nixon made much of the fact that the administration was unable to publicly acknowledge one of its main reasons for deployment of Safeguard; its value as a bargaining chip in future arms control talks with the Soviet Union. He described the situation as like 'fighting with one hand tied behind our back because we could not publicly explain the bargaining chip rationale for the ABM'.<sup>86</sup> Yet while the administration could not officially use this rationale for Safeguard with the public (although it was acknowledged in media reporting on the subject), they were able to utilise this argument with Congressional leaders who remained unconvinced. The logic of this strategy to sell ABM was also undermined by the rationale of ABM as a protection against third party limited attack. If the system was necessary in part to protect against a future

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<sup>83</sup> Hersh, *Price of Power*, 152.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 154

<sup>85</sup> 'Nixon Science Unit Cites ABM Flaws,' *Washington Post*, 14 March, 1969. During the weeks following the President's announcement, technical experts testified in public hearings in the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Subcommittee on Disarmament. Many prominent scientists expressed doubts about the capabilities of the Safeguard system. Former Presidential Science Advisors including James Killian, George Kistiakowski, Donald Hornig and Jerome Weisner provided testimony that cast doubt over the effectiveness of the planned technology. Halsted, *Lobbying Against the ABM*, 26.

<sup>86</sup> Nixon, *RN*, 417.

Chinese ICBM capability, as the Nixon administration argued publicly, then it would surely be highly imprudent to bargain it away in bilateral arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union.<sup>87</sup>

### *The politics of Safeguard*

Despite these concerns, Nixon approached the battle to pass the phase I Safeguard ABM system through the Senate as a purely partisan political one. According to Chief of Staff, Haldeman, the White House viewed the ABM debate as a potential ‘first battle of ’72, vs. Teddy Kennedy, and we *must* win [emphasis in original].’<sup>88</sup> In Haldeman and Kissinger’s estimation it was necessary to succeed on Safeguard to ‘get reelected’.<sup>89</sup> Nixon was convinced that the national media was biased in both the tone of its coverage on the issue and what he described as the ‘approximately 10 to 1 ratio [against us] that the networks are following in their news coverage of the ABM debate’ and he urged the White House Director of Communications, Herb Klein to force the networks to include more ‘pro-ABM people’ on their shows to present the administration’s view.<sup>90</sup>

The pro-ABM public relations campaign became what Klein described as ‘one of the most elaborate organisations the executive branch of government has seen in support of a major issue.’<sup>91</sup> Secretary Laird, on the advice of Harlow, set up a ‘quick reaction system’ to respond to any points brought up within the Senate hearings.<sup>92</sup> An ABM working group established within the White House met on a weekly basis and released several publications. The administration also organised a group to be run by William J. Casey, Nixon supporter and later Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Citizen’s Committee for Peace and Security, which would disseminate White House pro-ABM material.<sup>93</sup> Paul Nitze, Dean Acheson and Albert Wohlstetter also joined together to

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<sup>87</sup> This is something that Kissinger pointed out to Nixon in a memorandum. Kissinger was less positive about selling Safeguard with a Chinese rationale than Nixon. Kissinger to the President, 5 March, 1969, NSC Files Box 843, ABM Memoranda, Nixon Library.

<sup>88</sup> Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, 48.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>90</sup> Haldeman to Klein, April 1969, H. R. Haldeman Files, Box 50, Nixon Library.

<sup>91</sup> Klein, *Making It Perfectly Clear*, 197-198.

<sup>92</sup> Harlow to Secretary Laird, 24 March, 1969, NSC Files Box 843, Sentinel ABM System Volume I, Nixon Library.

<sup>93</sup> Klein, *Making It Perfectly Clear*, 198. In the following year Charles Colson founded the Citizen’s Committee to Safeguard America in support of the continuing battle to expand ABM.

support the administration's efforts and formed the 'Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy' and these two groups worked together to disseminate pro-ABM publications and provide witnesses before the Senate Armed Services Committee in support of ABM authorisation.<sup>94</sup> All through this period, Harlow and Kenneth BeLieu (another Nixon Congressional assistant responsible for ABM passage) continued to lobby members of the Senate to gain the required majority to authorise Safeguard in a Senate vote.

The administration also began to try to use the threat of a Soviet first strike to scare the public into support for ABM. In televised testimony to the Senate Disarmament Committee on 20 March, Secretary of Defense Laird pressed for the development of Safeguard as a matter of urgency as he declared that the Soviet Union was attempting to build a missile force that could eliminate the United State's missile capability with a single blow. He stated further that the threat could only be countered with an ABM system.<sup>95</sup> This reading of the Soviet intent was disputed by a review called 'Soviet Strategic Attack Forces' that was concurrently being conducted by CIA and DIA heads for the National Intelligence Estimate. This review concluded that it was 'highly unlikely that they [the Soviet Union] will attempt within the period of this estimate to achieve a first-strike capability.'<sup>96</sup>

Internal communications show that the idea of utilising the Soviet Union's supposed intent to gain first strike capability was part of a more general White House strategy to use the idea of fear within the ABM debate. In a memorandum to the president on 19 March, Patrick Buchanan, a Nixon speechwriter and communications advisor suggested '[w]hy not have Laird tell the nation how the Soviets have built up their troops in Europe....how they are building their own Polaris system, how many rockets are now

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<sup>94</sup> Nitze, *Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 295. See also Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson, The Cold War Years 1953-71* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 274.

<sup>95</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXXII, SALT I, 1969-1972* (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2010), 15.

<sup>96</sup> NIE 11-8-69 -- *Soviet Strategic Attack Forces*, 9 September, 1969.

[http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000268007.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000268007.pdf) Last accessed 3 April, 2014.



aimed at the United States...The media would have to cover it.’<sup>97</sup> He then went on to state that,

[y]es it would scare the American people some perhaps...[but] it would give us the ABM and it would throw Edward Kennedy into the posture of a naive young Senator who would leave America naked in a hostile world of powerful enemies...We’ve got the megaphone now, we’ve got the data, let’s use it judiciously for our own purposes, just as they used it for theirs.<sup>98</sup>

A follow-up memorandum from John Ehrlichman, Counsel and Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs praised the idea as ‘excellent’ and recommended action on the proposal.<sup>99</sup>

Senator J. William Fulbright publicly criticised Laird’s attempt to sell ABM through suggestions that the Soviets sought a first strike capability as ‘the technique of fear’ and anti-ABM advocates argued that such an idea was not based on any new intelligence.<sup>100</sup> The discrepancy between the assertions of the Secretary of Defense to the Senate Committees and the opinion of the intelligence community became a matter of public debate, losing the administration further credibility on the issue. As Robert Hunter argued at the time, even if the public and Congress could accept Secretary Laird’s claim that the Soviet Union was intent on achieving a knockout first strike capability, this justification was not consistent with the administration’s accompanying argument that ABM was necessary as a bargaining chip in future SALT negotiations.

It is difficult to understand how a nation like the Soviet Union, supposedly bent on achieving an ability to destroy the United States with impunity, would be prepared to enter into any serious negotiations on halting the arms race.<sup>101</sup>

By the end of April the administration felt that its ABM campaign was ‘running out of steam’.<sup>102</sup> The televised Senate hearings and effective public relations campaigning

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<sup>97</sup> Buchanan to the President, 11 February, 1969, NSC Files Box 843 ABM System Volume I 2-11-69 (Feb-Apr 69) Nixon Library.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> John D. Ehrlichman, NSC Files, 11 February 1969, Box 843 ABM System Volume I 2-11-69 (Feb-Apr 69), Nixon Library.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Fulbright Says Laird uses fear to promote ABM,’ *New York Times*, 22 March, 1969; ‘The Politician at the Pentagon,’ *Time Magazine*, 29 August, 1969; ‘Laird modifies Missile Warning,’ *New York Times*, 24 June, 1969.

<sup>101</sup> Robert E. Hunter, ‘The ABM: President Nixon’s Safeguard Programme,’ *The World Today* 25, no.5 (May 1969): 198.

<sup>102</sup> Alexander Butterfield to Henry Kissinger, 28 April, 1969, H. R. Haldeman Files Box 50, Memos Dr. Kissinger (Apr 69), Nixon Library.

by anti-ABM scientists in the preceding months had succeeded in placing doubts in the public's minds over the technological effectiveness of the Safeguard system.<sup>103</sup>

As the public battle continued into the early summer months, Nixon became more publicly combative on the issue.<sup>104</sup> By this time, Nixon had recognised that the administration was in a precarious situation and passage of the Safeguard system through Congress was looking far from certain, with media reports describing the Senate vote that would occur at some point during the summer as too close to call.<sup>105</sup> In a memorandum to Kissinger, Harlow and BeLieu, Alexander Butterfield stated that, as per his conversations with the President following the recent press conference and the associated media coverage, '[f]rom here on we should play a *hard* line publicly....and a *very very careful* explanatory line privately [emphasis in original]'.<sup>106</sup>

#### *A pyrrhic victory: the Senate finally votes on phase I of Safeguard*

As the Senate debated the Safeguard system throughout July, neither the White House nor the opposition could be sure of the outcome on any floor vote.<sup>107</sup> ABM finally came to the Senate floor on 6 August 1969 when votes took place on three amendments on Safeguard attached to the military authorisation bill that would have halted progress on the system to varying extents. A decent majority rejected an initial amendment banning all progress on

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<sup>103</sup> Public opposition had coalesced into several high-profile lobbying committees, the 'National Citizen's Committee Concerned about the Deployment of ABM', chaired by former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg and former Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric, and the 'National Science Advisory Committee on the ABM', chaired by former Presidential Science advisor Donald Hornig and former Director of Defense Research Herbert York. These two groups circulated anti-ABM material to the public and managed local and national events, see Halsted, *Lobbying Against the ABM*, 27. In May, Senator Edward Kennedy commissioned a highly critical report on the ABM that was edited by Jerome Weisner and former legal advisor to the State Department Abram Chayes, which received much publicity: Abram Chayes and Jerome B. Weisner, eds., *ABM: An Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Antiballistic Missile System* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

<sup>104</sup> In mid-June the ABM debate also became tied to a simultaneous discussion on Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle, (MIRV) technology and linked to the increasing pressure being put on Nixon to begin arms control talks with the Soviet Union. MIRV technology allowed several nuclear warheads to be placed on each missile which could be programmed to hit different targets. This technology was being tested by the United States and becoming a subject of controversy that would be a potential topic of discussion at any future arms control talks with the Soviet Union. For a further discussion of the MIRV debate see Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, Ch. 5; Gerard Smith, *Double Talk*, 154-179.

<sup>105</sup> 'Senate Foes Rely on McIntyre,' *New York Times*, 26 July, 1969.

<sup>106</sup> Butterfield to Kissinger, Harlow, BeLieu, June 1969, H. R. Haldeman Files, Box 50, Memos-Dr. Henry Kissinger (June 69), Nixon Library [emphasis underlined in original].

<sup>107</sup> 'Senate opposition to Safeguard Relies on McIntyre in Key Vote,' *New York Times*, 26 July, 1969.

ABM, including research and development. The second vote was on an amendment that would ban Safeguard but allow some other missile defence research to continue. It resulted in a 50-50 vote and the tie was broken against the amendment by Vice President Spiro Agnew. The final vote was conducted on the Cooper-Hart amendment, which proposed merely to delay the Safeguard programme for a year and this was rejected by a vote of 49-51.<sup>108</sup> This outcome was the smallest possible margin of victory for the administration. The Safeguard system would begin phase I of deployment as planned, but much had been altered in the process of the debate on authorisation.

While Nixon had prevailed in the Senate vote, it had come at a price for the public perception of the technological and strategic viability of the planned Safeguard system. The anti-ABM scientists' public campaign had significantly undermined the administration's initial justifications for the ABM system and purely technological arguments could no longer be made in favour of Safeguard because of these scientists' effective campaigning in the media and in public Senate testimony. The White House and pro-ABM campaigners had been forced to change their justifications for Safeguard by the end of the 1969 encounter. In his closing speech before the August Senate vote, pro-ABM Senator Henry Jackson actually attempted to move the debate away from the question of whether or not the system was technologically workable, arguing that, '[w]e don't settle an issue like the ABM by claiming it won't work...trying to make one's case by the method of scientific authority won't wash'. He went on to argue that, 'if we can walk on the moon, we can make the Safeguard program work.' Jackson then made the case for the necessity for Safeguard as a bargaining chip with the Soviet Union saying that he was,

confident President Nixon is going to be in a better position to negotiate with the Soviets on nuclear arms control when the Senate has voted to give him the authority to move ahead with phase I of Safeguard.<sup>109</sup>

This was a very different set of arguments from those advanced by the White House in March when Safeguard was first announced, and the implicit appeal for trust was the first sign of the administration's subsequent turn to an explicit request for the public to cease questioning the administration and simply trust the president on the issue.

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<sup>108</sup> Nixon, *RN*, 417; Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*. For an analysis of Congressional voting patterns on ABM see Robert A. Bernstein and William W. Anthony, 'The ABM Issue in the Senate, 1968-1970: The Importance of Ideology,' *American Political Science Review* 68, no. 3 (1974): 1198-1206.

<sup>109</sup> 'Excerpts from Closing Debate in Senate on the Antimissile Issue,' *New York Times*, 7 August, 1969.

The prolonged battle over phase I of Safeguard also had another consequence for the White House. Because the initial fight had damaged the credibility of the programme to such a great extent and because the vote had been so close, Nixon was forced to become more publicly involved than he would have chosen. This is why the battle of 1969 was a pyrrhic victory for the administration; Nixon won the Senate authorisation vote and defeated the proposed amendments, but at great cost to the public's perception of the operational viability of the programme and using considerable presidential political capital. Phase II would not be fought on the virtues of the system, so Nixon would need to find another way to convince a sceptical public and Congress of the merits of Safeguard. The following section of the chapter will show how, bereft of scientific or strategically accepted bases on which to sell further deployment of Safeguard, and continuing to view the debate through the lens of domestic politics, the Nixon administration turned to the use of a particular meaning for trust in order to argue for acceptance of phase II of Safeguard deployment.

*'Damned if we do and damned if we don't.' The second phase of the Safeguard battle*

The White House was eager to use the Safeguard phase I victory to enhance Nixon's prestige and in the process to pre-empt any damaging implications of the close vote. In a memorandum from the president to Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Kissinger the day after the Senate vote, Nixon was insistent on turning the vote into a personal and political triumph:

The ABM vote is a major victory and I want the three of you to discuss it with Harlow in terms of getting out the true story as to Presidential influence and the "Nixon Style" in dealing with the Congress...point out that RN made the decision to tackle ABM head on against the advice of most of his major advisors, including particularly the State Department...point out that the President was in constant charge of the PR aspects of the ABM fight...

The final paragraph of the memorandum reinforced the importance of this endeavour: 'I cannot emphasise the importance of getting this story broadly circulated...This is the top priority project and I want everybody enlisted to carry it out.' Nixon felt that this was

particularly important as he thought that the press might turn the narrow margin of victory into what he described as ‘another one of those sour grape stories.’<sup>110</sup>

However, cementing the tie between the president’s prestige and the success of ABM was perhaps not the most farsighted of strategies, as the phased nature of the Safeguard deployment meant that the system had to be reviewed annually and any further deployment phases approved by Congress. This meant that Nixon would be forced to replay the Safeguard confrontation in 1970 and in subsequent years if he wanted to implement further phases of the system to reach the ultimate goal of twelve ABM sites. There was, in fact, little time to celebrate the Senate victory of 1969 and as the end of the year approached, the administration began to decide how it would go forward with the phased system. In a news conference on 30 January 1970, Nixon announced that after conducting an administration review, he intended to go ahead with the implementation of phase II of Safeguard deployment and that Secretary Laird would announce details ‘in about 30 days’.<sup>111</sup> Describing it as ‘[t]he minimum we can and must do, both in cost and in system development, to fulfil the President’s national security objectives’, on 24 February Secretary Laird announced a plan that would authorise deployment for one further site for Minuteman protection at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri and preliminary preparation for a further four sites, including one for Washington DC.<sup>112</sup>

The administration was aware of the political challenges that implementing phase II would entail. In a memorandum to the president in January, Kissinger wrote that whatever the deployment plan would involve, ‘we must be prepared to deal with a variety of criticisms, some of which we did not face last year in so sharp a form’, as he believed that ‘it is likely that we will have another bloody fight on the Hill.’<sup>113</sup> The memorandum illustrated the administration’s difficulty implementing and justifying phase II of Safeguard after the close congressional battle and intense technical criticism of the previous year. It outlined some ‘troublesome’ issues raised by a Department of Defense

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<sup>110</sup> The President to Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Kissinger, 1 June, 1969, NSC Files Box 844, ABM Sentinel System Volume III 6-1-69 (1 of 2), Nixon Library.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Nixon, The President’s News Conference, 30 January, 1970, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2558>. Last accessed 13 March, 2013.

<sup>112</sup> The President’s Safeguard Recommendation for FY1971, 24 April, 1970, Charles Colson Files, Box 24, ABM-Safeguard 1970 V (2 of 3) Nixon Library.

<sup>113</sup> Memorandum for the President, 16 January, 1970, from National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 36, *Missile Defense Thirty Years Ago: Déjà Vu All Over Again?* Document 7. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB36/index.html> Last accessed 12 November, 2013.

study regarding the continuance of Safeguard if primarily focused on defending Minuteman bases. This study acknowledged that there existed a 'serious technical argument' the Soviets could overwhelm the planned Sprint radar components by launching additional attacking missiles, and that questions could therefore be raised about the ability of Safeguard as conceived to adequately protect the US retaliatory capability. The memorandum admitted that these concerns,

at the very least, provide ammunition to those who will argue that the Minuteman defense element of Safeguard may be obsolete by the time they are operational and that even the Defense Department no longer has confidence in Safeguard as a significant protection of the deterrent.

However, Kissinger further recognised that, despite these qualms, they might have to maintain their focus on Minuteman site defence in phase II of deployment because changing the aims and justifications for Safeguard would leave them open to criticisms of inconsistency in their rationale for the system: 'If we don't add a further Minuteman site, and emphasise the area defence rationale, we will be criticised for inconsistency with DOD's arguments last year.'<sup>114</sup>

The PSAC Strategic Military Panel also continued to warn of the technical limitations of the system and advised the president to search for alternative means for protecting Minuteman bases. NSC staff member Laurence E. Lynn informed Kissinger that the PSAC report 'suggests that on the merit, there are strong technical arguments against any further deployment of the Safeguard components for Minuteman defense', and that '[i]f -- or rather when -- that fact leaks, it could significantly strengthen the opposition's arguments not only against expanding the system, but even against the Phase I decision.'<sup>115</sup>

The White House was therefore in a difficult situation with regard to phase II deployment as once again strategic viability clashed with political expediency. Safeguard's capacity to achieve its stated purpose had been publicly undermined throughout the past year, but changing that purpose would also lead to criticisms of inconsistency that would further damage the administration's credibility on the issue.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. Kissinger places the blame for the inconsistency in phase II on Nixon, stating in his memoirs that 'Nixon, convinced that nothing else would pass Congress and preferring an illogical ABM deployment to none at all, opted for Laird's recommendation of Whiteman'. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 539.

<sup>115</sup> Laurence E. Lynn to Kissinger, PSAC Strategic Military Panel Comments on Minuteman ABM Defense, 5 January, 1970, NSC Files, Box 840, ABM System Vol. III, Nixon Library.

Kissinger's memorandum summed this up succinctly by acknowledging that, with respect to deciding whether or not to focus phase II of their Safeguard deployment on Minuteman defence, 'we may well be damned if we do and damned if we don't.'<sup>116</sup>

### *The contradictions of phase II*

Nixon's political dilemma was reflected in the apparent contradictions between the nature of his announcement of phase II of Safeguard on 30 January and the subsequent budget request made by Secretary Laird. In his initial announcement Nixon, most likely basing his speech on the DoD report, emphasised the Chinese threat as the driving force behind the design of further deployment. He stated that 'our decision involves area defense', which he described as 'absolutely essential as against any minor power, a power, for example, like Communist China.'<sup>117</sup> As Kissinger had anticipated in his memorandum, the apparent change in focus away from protecting Minuteman bases from a Soviet attack towards area defence and the Chinese threat subsequently provoked much opposition in Congress and accusations of duplicity and inconsistency, setting off what the *New York Times* described at the time as 'another bruising, divisive ABM debate in the Senate'.<sup>118</sup> Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-MA) launched an attack on this apparent incoherence, declaring that in the previous year the president had stated that the previous area defence system was,

being abandoned because it could not be made to work to defend cities against a hypothetical attack of Soviet warheads and because he [the president] could not "buy" the contention of its value for that purpose against a hypothetical attack of Chinese warheads. Yet, this year it is proposed that Safeguard be extended to include defense of cities against precisely such an attack from Chinese sources.<sup>119</sup>

Laird's budget request on 24 February moved the immediate focus away from the Chinese-oriented area defence that had raised such strong objections. The authorisation request would instead add a further Minuteman site, with only preliminary land acquisition

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Nixon, The President's News Conference, 30 January, 1970, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2558>. Last accessed 12 November, 2013.

<sup>118</sup> 'ABM: Weapon in Search of A Mission,' *New York Times*, 8 February, 1970.

<sup>119</sup> 'Mansfield Opens Attack on Proposal to Expand ABM,' *New York Times*, 5 February, 1970.

plans for any area defence.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, subsequent statements on the system either underplayed or completely ignored any justifications based on future Chinese or other third-party threats. This would suggest that Nixon ultimately made the decision that a Minuteman missile defence, Soviet-focused system would be less politically problematic to sell than a Chinese-focused area defence system and that he was continuing to base decisions about ABM on their domestic political usefulness.

At the same time Bell Telephone Laboratories, the principal contractor for the Safeguard system, expressed its reluctance to continue working on the ABM project. Lynn informed Kissinger that Bell had announced its wish to stop working on Safeguard after implementation of phase II, citing ‘an unwillingness to continue to be associated with a programme which cannot technically perform the missions the Government claims it will accomplish.’<sup>121</sup> Again, Nixon and Kissinger perceived this opposition to the Safeguard system as politically motivated and dismissed the technical objections to the system. In a memorandum to the president, Kissinger doubted the strength of Bell’s technical arguments and speculated that the real reason for the objections was that Bell was reluctant to carry on working on such a controversial programme. However, he described the impact of these critiques from Bell, ‘whatever their validity or sincerity’, as ‘potentially devastating’. In a handwritten note on the memo, the president also expressed his doubts over the sincerity of Bell’s stated technological objections: ‘My guess is that the *real* reasons are their scientists and P.R [emphasis in original]’.<sup>122</sup>

Nixon was thus pushed into a corner on the issue of Safeguard. His credibility had been seriously damaged by the public accusations of incoherence and cynicism on the issue. Furthermore, the compromises he had made in the attempt to make the programme politically successful had left him with limited counter-arguments to make to these criticisms based on the coherence and actual strategic merits of the system. By 1970, public opinion was also moving further away from Safeguard; while a small majority had

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<sup>120</sup> An earlier reported request for construction of an area defence in Washington State, which would have been strategically China-focused, was also removed from the budget after objections from Senator Jackson and the State Department. ‘The ABM v. SALT,’ *New York Times*, 1 March, 1970, see also ‘2 Key Senators Voice ABM Doubts,’ *New York Times*, 24 February, 1970.

<sup>121</sup> Lynn to Kissinger, 14 April, 1970, FY 71 Safeguard ABM Decision with attachments, from National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, *Missile Defense Thirty Years Ago: Déjà Vu All Over Again?* Document 7. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB36/index.html> Last accessed 12 November, 2013.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid [emphasis underlined in original].



been in favour of deployment of phase I in 1969, as the programme continued a majority of the public opposed expanding the programme further.<sup>123</sup> Opponents of ABM also made objections to a Safeguard system that was oriented to thwart a Soviet missile attack on the grounds that it would stall progress and undermine US credibility at the next SALT round in Vienna in April. The first session of SALT I had begun in Helsinki in November of 1969 and had ended with an agreement to resume talks in April of the following year.<sup>124</sup> Critics of Safeguard (including Gerard Smith) argued that further planned deployment of ABM systems would undermine the upcoming round two SALT negotiations.<sup>125</sup>

### **‘Trust me, I’m the president,’ Nixon talks about trust**

Understanding that any combination of strategic and technological justification for Safeguard would be problematic in some way, the White House attempted to circumvent these problems in the phase II debate by choosing to focus not on what Safeguard could actually do, but on what it represented. A memorandum to the president on the Safeguard support effort reported that in meetings with Congressional leaders, presidential aides were placing ‘[c]ontinuing emphasis on the importance of Safeguard both to negotiating success at SALT, as part of a SALT agreement, and as a definite necessity in the event of failure of SALT.’<sup>126</sup> In a public relations document entitled ‘ABM-the key to ending the arms race,’ the military benefits of Safeguard were underplayed. The document described ABM as ‘the castle in the chess game’, and asserted that ‘[i]ts significance far transcends either its effectiveness as a weapon system, as a deterrent or as a means of protection for our cities. It is the essential and indispensable ingredient to arms control, de-facto or de-jure.’<sup>127</sup> As Thomas Halsted, National Director for the Council for a Livable World wrote,

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<sup>123</sup> Thomas W. Graham and Bernard M. Kramer, ‘The Polls: ABM and Star Wars: Attitudes Toward Nuclear Defense, 1945-1985,’ *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 50, no.1 (1986): 125-134.

<sup>124</sup> For a full account of this prohibited here by space constraints see Smith, *Double Talk* and Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*.

<sup>125</sup> For example this point was made by George Kennan in Senate Committee hearings on the topic. ‘ABM: Weapon in Search of a Mission,’ *New York Times*, 8 February, 1970.

<sup>126</sup> Jerry Friedheim to the President, undated (early 1970) Charles Colson Files Box 24, ABM-Safeguard 1970 V (2 of 3), Nixon Library.

<sup>127</sup> ABM-the key to ending the arms race, undated (early 1970) Charles Colson Files Box 24, ABM-Safeguard-ABM II (2 of 3), Nixon Library. Colson was hired in late 1969 to work on public relations and image issues and became a very influential presence within the White House and someone to whom Nixon turned for execution of some of the more unsavoury image control and manipulation tasks. Colson was a strong believer in the president and stridently partisan voice in internal White House communications. His devotion to the cause of Richard Nixon was described by Director of Communications Herb Klein thusly:

‘the administration was really no longer arguing for Safeguard at all, but rather for its prerogatives in military and diplomatic decision making.’<sup>128</sup>

With such limited avenues of explanation to try to convince Congress and the public of the merits of Safeguard, the White House began to talk about trusting in the president to sell the planned expansion of the programme. Two days after Secretary Laird’s announcement of the phase II proposal, Alexander Haig, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, wrote to Lynn to say that the president had developed key themes to accompany ABM information that he wanted all administration speakers on the topic to use. The primary theme proposed by the president to sell Safeguard was that of trust. The memorandum stated, ‘[w]e should put our trust in the President. He alone has the facts, the intelligence upon which a sound decision should be made.’<sup>129</sup>

The second theme expanded on this idea of trusting the president’s judgment, presenting the argument that it was ‘inconceivable that the President would spend \$900 million at this point in time if the system were not needed’.<sup>130</sup> In this manner, Nixon had moved away from trying to convince a sceptical public and Congress that Safeguard was useful and viable, but instead was trying to convince them to trust in his judgment as president that it was necessary. The White House also drafted a letter from the president to send in response to any correspondence and to solicit support. This letter is quite remarkable in its almost total lack of effort to try and convince the reader of the merits of the proposed programme. Its line of reasoning rests completely on the thesis that readers should simply trust the president to make the right decision rather than trying to come to a decision on the issue themselves.

It should be emphasized that we must put our trust in the President, to whom we have given the responsibility for insuring the security of this nation. The President has all the intelligence information and relevant facts upon which to base a sound

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‘When he [Colson] issued a staff memo during the 1972 Republican National Convention saying he would gladly walk over the body of his grandmother to assure the election of Richard Nixon, I took him to mean that literally.’ Klein, *Making it Perfectly Clear*, 278.

<sup>128</sup> Halsted, ‘Lobbying for the ABM,’ 28.

<sup>129</sup> Alexander Haig to Larry Lynn, 29 February, 1970, NSC Box 841 ABM System Memos (1 of 3), Nixon Library.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

decision. The President has weighed the arguments for and against this program and concluded that it is essential to the national security.

In making budget decision of this magnitude the President has been faced with agonizing choices as to how to most effectively allocate funds for vital competing programs. It is inconceivable that the President would decide to spend money on this program at a time when so many other urgent national needs exist unless he were convinced that there was no other alternative.<sup>131</sup>

While the letter did advance the argument that a Soviet build up of strategic arms required a US response, in proposing Safeguard as the solution to this problem it portrayed it merely as a less escalatory response than that of an offensive weapons build-up. It minimised the import and scope of the system, representing it as more of the result of a necessity for ongoing research to deal with the imperatives of technological development, rather than a system that effectively served a strategic purpose:

The Soviets already have an ABM system and have boasted of its effectiveness. It is only logical that we have a modest system in being so that we can also determine the reliability of our own program. In this age of rapid technological change it is only with an ongoing development and test program that we can assure an effective system.<sup>132</sup>

The use of the language of unquestioning trust in the president to justify phase II of Safeguard deployment is also evident in a further letter that was drafted for Nixon supporters to use in advocating support of the programme. The letter described the system, not as a technical solution to a strategic problem, but as more of an ongoing research project that would be developed through deployment. 'The Safeguard program will allow the US to build an ABM system and test its effectiveness so that we also keep up with technological progress in this area.' Once again, the main justification for expansion was no longer based on the intrinsic worth of Safeguard itself, but on a blatant appeal to simply trust the President.

It is the President to whom we have given the terrible responsibility of insuring the safety of this country. We should trust his judgment since he has available all the facts, not just about this program, but about how it relates to the rest of our foreign and military policies.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Draft letter from the President, (short version) 5 March, 1970, NSC Files Box 841, ABM System Memos and Misc, Vol IV (2 of 3), Nixon Library.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Letter from the President, 5 March, 1970, NSC Files Box 841 ABM System Memos and Misc, Vol IV (2 of 3), Nixon Library.

In a further document alongside the letter called 'Themes', this strategy was once again evident. 'Even if you have doubts personally about this or that aspect of the decision', it affirmed 'once the President chooses, he is entitled to be benefit of the doubt.'<sup>134</sup> A further document on the issue, an administration fact sheet entitled 'Safeguard Proposal for 1971' repeated the same theme, asserting that it was,

the President to whom the American people have entrusted the awesome responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of the United States. If the President, who has before him all available intelligence information and relevant facts—not just about the system but about its relationship to our foreign and military policies—determines that this program is vital to the national security, then that judgment must be respected.<sup>135</sup>

In June of 1970, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted 11-6 to eliminate the funds for land acquisition and construction for the four phase II area-defence sites requested by the President from the Military Authorization Bill, but approved the request for funds to begin further deployment of Minuteman defence at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.<sup>136</sup> The final judgment on phase II was made by Congress on 12 August when the Senate voted by a margin of 47-52 to defeat the Cooper Hart amendment to the Authorization Bill, which would have withheld authorisation for the Missouri Safeguard site.<sup>137</sup> This vote was reported at the time to have been heavily influenced by a last minute message from Gerard Smith distributed to Senators by BeLieu asserting that expansion was 'crucial to the success of the negotiations'.<sup>138</sup>

Nixon was able to continue, in a somewhat modified fashion, with plans for Safeguard deployment for the following year but the challenges to the programme would continue to concern the administration until the United States and the Soviet Union signed the ABM treaty and the debate became moot. The ABM Treaty limited both the United States and the Soviet Union to two sites, one at the national capital and one to protect a

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<sup>134</sup> Themes, 5 March, 1970, NSC Files Box 841 ABM System Memos and Misc, Vol IV (2 of 3), Nixon Library.

<sup>135</sup> Safeguard Proposal for 1971, April 1970, Charles Colson Files Box 24, ABM-Safeguard 1970 V (2 of 3), Nixon Library.

<sup>136</sup> Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy*, 160.

<sup>137</sup> 'Expansion of ABM backed by Senate by 52-47 Vote,' *New York Times*, 13 August, 1970.

<sup>138</sup> This action was contrary to the actual wishes of Smith who later wrote in his account of the SALT he had felt it important 'that the delegation not appear to be lobbying for the ABM program and that the SALT negotiation not appear to be leverage for ABMs'. He describes his 'disgust' upon hearing his confidential views had been used on the Senate floor. Smith, *Double Talk*, 148-9.

missile site.<sup>139</sup> The treaty was later modified to permit only one site per country and so the only US site that ever achieved operational capability was at Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota which briefly operated in 1975 before being shut down by Congress.

The great Safeguard debate never again hit the controversial heights of 1969 and 1970 but instead rather fizzled out over the ensuing years because of these other developments. However, it is not the ultimate outcome of the battle that is of greatest interest to this study. What is of significance in this case is the manner in which Nixon chose to contest this battle over Safeguard once his strategic and technological rationales were undermined, how he began to talk about trust, and what an assessment of the significance of his specific meaning for trust in this context can reveal. The following sections will provide a closer examination of these questions.

### **The ironies of ‘trust the president’**

Nixon’s use of the word ‘trust’ in the Safeguard debate provides an example of how, in the context of the contemporary political climate and the politics of the nuclear age, Nixon’s grammar of trust was one of ‘responsibility’, ‘knowledge’, ‘authority’ and ‘leadership’. This is a very particular meaning for trust. Nixon did not speak of trust in relations to values, personal attributes or personal relationships but in terms of power and position. The message was that one should trust Nixon, not because he was personally trustworthy but because he was the president, and in a time of conflict and danger, he had the ultimate responsibility for the safety of the nation. This section will illustrate some of the ironies within President Nixon’s specific use of trust in this context and how, if one can describe Nixon’s grammar of trust in the context of use, one can locate this in a broader understanding of the politics of the time.

Nixon talked about trust as based on the idea of superior knowledge. He demanded the trust of the public based on the fact that as president he had access to more information than them. As the public relations letter on the subject of Safeguard argued, ‘[w]e should trust his judgment since he has available all the facts, not just about this program, but

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<sup>139</sup> ‘Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems.’ <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/trty/16332.htm> Last accessed 17 April, 2014.

about how it relates to the rest of our foreign and military policies'.<sup>140</sup> This can be understood within a wider culture of the Nixon White House, the implicit faith in the superiority of information and rationality which is further evidenced in the countless studies and analyses demanded by Nixon and Kissinger's NSC.<sup>141</sup> For Nixon and Kissinger, increased information meant better judgments. As the president, Nixon had access to more information therefore his judgments were naturally superior irrespective of any opinions on his personal abilities to make better judgments. The argument was therefore that one should trust President Nixon, not because he was in himself trustworthy, but because, as president he had the authority and necessary information to make the right decisions.

In using this argument, Nixon presented a meaning for trust built on an imbalance of power that was based on his possession of superior knowledge and on deference to the office of the president. Talking about trust in this way was an invocation, not only to accept this power imbalance, but to acquiesce to the logic that its very existence granted to the more powerful actor in the relationship a large degree of discretion in acting. In this manner, trust was both the motivation for and legitimation of a continuing conformity to the authority of the president's actions. Trust, here in its Nixonian public incarnation, was invoked as an unquestioning acceptance of President Nixon's ability to make decisions on behalf of American citizens, based on his innate authority as president and the superior knowledge that the office afforded him. This was a somewhat tautological view of trust. The Nixon White House was saying 'it is because I am so powerful that you must trust me; and it is in the act of trusting me that you must enable my power' or put more simply 'you must trust me because you have to trust me'. The great irony of this was that, as this chapter has illustrated, on many occasions the decisions of the president were in fact not being made based on grand strategic calculations or greater technical knowledge but on political calculations, prejudice and often feelings of personal pride and vanity.<sup>142</sup> An

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<sup>140</sup> Draft letter from the President, 5 March, 1970, NSC Files Box 841 ABM System Memos and Misc, vol IV (2 of 3), Nixon Library.

<sup>141</sup> For further details of the administration's reliance on multiple foreign policy studies and the expressed belief in the primacy of rationality and information see Siniver, *Nixon, Kissinger and U.S. Foreign Policy Making*, 49.

<sup>142</sup> This disconnect between the Nixon and Kissinger portrayal of extreme rationality and the often contrast with their actions is a wider theme of the administration on foreign policy. Nixon developed a system of foreign policy making that was in theory based on an efficient and rational NSC process and extensive studies, but in practice decisions were made by Nixon and Kissinger who generally ignored the rest of the bureaucracy and often based decisions on their prejudices, preconceptions and domestic political concerns.

ongoing feature of the ABM debate was the exclusion of critical scientific voices from the decision-making process.<sup>143</sup> Nixon also refused to engage with reports from within his own administration, from PSAC, from defence contractors such as Bell Telephone Laboratories and from the CIA if they contradicted his judgements on the issue.

The contrast between Nixon's use of trust to portray himself as a rational calculating actor and his actual actions can be seen in his attitude and responses to the media and public criticism. The idea of the deference due to the office of president informed the administration's response to opposition and Nixon took any criticism of his policies personally and often responded irrationally.<sup>144</sup> The infamous 'enemies list' is perhaps the most prominent example of this but in fact this way of thinking pervaded the administration's approach to governing and politics throughout his time in office. This sense of victimisation is clear in his description of himself as 'one of the most hated' presidents, and the many comparisons he would make between his unfavourable treatment by the media and the treatment given to other presidents in the past.<sup>145</sup> He often decried the ability of the press to understand foreign policy, describing them variously as 'clowns',<sup>146</sup> the 'hostile press',<sup>147</sup> and as writing from a 'biased viewpoint'.<sup>148</sup> A Haldeman talking paper of 1971 declared that

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For accounts of this see Ambrose, *Nixon Volume II*, 410; Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*; Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, 5-8; Barbara Keys, 'Henry Kissinger: The Emotional Statesman,' *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 4 (2011): 587-609; Siniver, *Nixon, Kissinger and U.S. Foreign Policy Making*. Also Haldeman for examples of what he describes as Kissinger's 'weird persecution delusions' regarding Secretary of State Rogers. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, 189.

<sup>143</sup> Nixon eventually disbanded PSAC after gaining re-election in 1972.

<sup>144</sup> See for example Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 122. Nixon also had a fondness for the idea of lie detectors and more than once asked his aides to use them to investigate internal leaks to the press. This order was one of many that were perhaps judiciously ignored by his Chief of Staff Haldeman. See Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, 329. Gerard Smith subsequently wrote Nixon used the that the media leaks on SALT 'as an excuse by the White House for narrowing access to SALT information so at times the negotiation proceeded without any technically qualified officials aware of what was going on.' Smith, *Doubletalk*, 236-237.

<sup>145</sup> Marvin Kalb, *The Nixon Memo, Political Responsibility, Russia and the Press* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 15. See also accounts of this environment in the White House from Nixon staffers in Klein, *Making it Perfectly Clear*; Raymond Price, *With Nixon* (New York: Viking Press, 1977); James Keogh, *President Nixon and the Press* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1972) and Jeb Magruder, *An American Life, One Man's Road to Watergate* (New York: Atheneum, 1974).

<sup>146</sup> Price, *With Nixon*, 111.

<sup>147</sup> Klein, *Making it Perfectly Clear*, 109.

<sup>148</sup> Haldeman to Klein, 16 September, 1970 in Klein, *Making it Perfectly Clear*, 125. This memorandum, sent from Haldeman but written by Nixon provides the clearest insight into Nixon's view of his relationship to the press and sense of victimisation and listing a set of grievances and perceived injustices. It stated for example that 'He [Nixon] got where he was in spite of what they [the media] did rather than because of

[t]he establishment now, in terms of the intellectual elite, is decadent and its [sic] wrong. The reason that the President is hated so by them is because they are afraid he might succeed, and therefore, beat them.<sup>149</sup>

Nixon was convinced that mainstream press and network news were actively hostile to his presidency and intent on undermining him. He claimed that he had ‘entered the Presidency with less support from the major publications and TV networks than any President in history’.<sup>150</sup> He therefore considered all press criticism as based on either a lack of understanding or on hostility to his authority and so framed critique as either ignorance or enmity.

In July 1969, for example, Alexander Butterfield sent a memorandum to Ehrlichman and Kissinger in response to a news story about the impact of public opinion on the president’s Vietnam decisions. The memorandum stated that the president ‘would like you two to get together and see Drummond [the reporter] and make it clear to him that he (the President) is less affected by press criticism and popular opinion “than any President in recent memory.”’<sup>151</sup> Apparently unaware of the irony of responding to such a news story by sending his two top aides to see the reporter in question and impress upon him how very little he cared about the press’ opinion, this memorandum is highly indicative of the confrontational relationship that Nixon had with the media. Nixon’s view was that the media, (apart from a few ‘friendly’ conservative news outlets) was not providing balanced commentary but rather was a partisan body with an agenda to undermine the administration at every opportunity.<sup>152</sup> This attitude became problematic for members of the administration who felt that it was counter-productive and that too much time was spent reacting to negative news stories at the president’s request. In a memorandum to Haldeman, for example, Special Assistant to the President Jeb Magruder argued that too much focus was being placed on reacting to every negative news story,

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them,’ and therefore prescribed the tactic of ignoring this biased press and attempting instead to communicate directly to the public.

<sup>149</sup> Talking paper for the 3 o’clock meeting, undated (September 1971), H. R. Haldeman Files Box 153, Talking Papers 1971 (1 of 2), Nixon Library.

<sup>150</sup> The President to Haldeman, 6 January, 1970 quoted in Chester Pach, “‘Our Worst Enemy Seems to Be the Press’: TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam,’ *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3 (2010): 556.

<sup>151</sup> Butterfield to John Ehrlichman and Henry Kissinger, 16 July, 1969, Herb Klein Files Box 5, White House Action Memoranda 1969, (1 of 3), Nixon Library.

<sup>152</sup> See Ambrose, *Nixon Volume II*, 250.



describing the ‘endless stream of memos pouring down on me, Herb Klein, and various others, each one demanding action to counter this or that bit of criticism in the media.’<sup>153</sup>

The way in which Nixon attempted to shut down the debate on Safeguard by talking about trust is indicative of a wider approach to communicating his foreign policy decisions. Nixon believed that the best manner to communicate the president’s authority was not to engage in a discussion with the press over policy issues, but instead to bypass the press as much as possible and go directly to the public, what he described as ‘the essence of democracy.’<sup>154</sup> In this manner the president could convey his authority directly to the ‘silent majority’ of the American people without it being mediated through what he saw as a biased news media. Nixon therefore conducted fewer press conferences and interviews than his predecessors, instead preferring formats that let him speak directly to the American public.<sup>155</sup>

Though Nixon relied on the public’s support to legitimate foreign policy decision-making, because of his disdain for both Congress and the media, he rarely made any systematic attempt to educate the public but instead often resorted to clichés and sound bites. As Melanson argues, ‘Nixon behaved as if “peace with honour” [Nixon’s slogan regarding Vietnam] could be achieved if Congress would only “shut up”’.<sup>156</sup> The turn to the use of trust was an attempt to speak to the American people directly about ABM, but it

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<sup>153</sup> Magruder, *An American Life*, 84. See also Haldeman for specific examples of direct retaliatory action ordered by Nixon such as this direction in reaction to media response to a Nixon Speech, ‘if only do one thing get 100 vicious dirty calls to *New York Times* and *Washington Post* about their editorials (even though no idea what they’ll be)’. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, 104.

<sup>154</sup> Nixon, *RN*, 411.

<sup>155</sup> Also significant was Nixon’s perception of the importance of the televised debates during his Presidential run against John F. Kennedy in 1960. For further accounts of this see Bochín, *Richard Nixon, Rhetorical Strategist*; Keogh, *Nixon and the Press*; Iwan Morgan, *Nixon* (London: Arnold, 2002); Kalb, *The Nixon Memo*. This faith in the power of television perhaps went back to the effectiveness of the ‘Checkers Speech’ he gave in a television broadcast when running for Vice President in 1952 in which he refuted claims of campaign finance irregularity and the existence of an illegal slush fund. A fund that had been established by Nixon political backers to cover his campaign expenses became a controversial public issue in September 1952 and Nixon’s position as Eisenhower’s running mate began to look precarious. In a thirty minute national television address Nixon explained the details of the fund, defended his actions and attacked his accusers. He also described his humble upbringing and went into great detail in explaining his family’s limited finances before describing a gift of a dog the family had received after the 1950 election which his daughter had named ‘Checkers’ and which ‘regardless of what they say about it, we’re gonna keep’. Although the emotional appeal of the speech with its references to his wife’s ‘cloth coat’ has been mocked (and ‘Checkers Speech’ is often used now as shorthand for a corny emotional appeal) it was highly successful. It was watched by 58 million people and resulted in a vast response from the public who sent messages of support to the offices of the Republican National Committee (RNC). See Aitken, *Nixon: A Life*, 208-220; Price, *With Nixon*, 53-58. Checkers Speech

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/richardnixoncheckers.html> Last accessed 4 February, 2014.

<sup>156</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*, 85.

was also another example of a message being communicated that was, in its most basic form, that his opponents should ‘shut up’.

The pressure on Nixon to succeed in the contest over Safeguard deployment also came from the role of ABM within the SALT negotiations. SALT was becoming increasingly important in terms of justifying the portrayal of Nixon as a great statesman in the face of his lack of success in ending the war in Vietnam and increased domestic pressures and Congressional push back on national security policy and spending. SALT, according to Iwan Morgan, would be ‘the vehicle to open up the “era of negotiations” that Nixon had promised Americans in his inaugural address’.<sup>157</sup> However, it is another irony of this analysis that, once again, the focus on the politics of SALT led to a set of agreements that would ultimately become politically vulnerable. The administration was more interested in selling the ‘Nixon as world leader’ narrative domestically than the SALT agreements themselves, which meant that a domestic constituency was never maintained in favour of the SALT process.<sup>158</sup> Gerard Smith and Paul Nitze both claimed that domestic political considerations undermined the credibility and success of the SALT negotiations and the eventual agreements that were produced, and Smith condemned what he termed Nixon’s overwhelming ‘lust for a summit’.<sup>159</sup> Nixon and Kissinger had both recognised the importance of a summit in neutralising the public anti-war attacks on Nixon at the time. ‘It would defuse people’, Kissinger declared in conversation with Nixon, ‘they can’t very well attack their President when he is getting ready for a summit meeting’.<sup>160</sup>

### *The ‘madman theory’*

Nixon’s use of trust in the case of the Safeguard ABM debate was predominantly targeted at a domestic audience. Nixon did not explicitly use the idea of a need for trust with reference to the issue of ABM in the international realm or to nuclear arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union in general. In fact, when speaking of the SALT process, administration officials only discussed trust in order to deny its role in arms

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<sup>157</sup> Morgan, *Nixon*, 137.

<sup>158</sup> See for example a memorandum from Colson sent after the Moscow summit that stated that ‘[o]ur task, however, is not to achieve great public support for SALT, but rather to strengthen the President’s personal image as one of the great world leaders of this century.’ In Reeves, *President Nixon*, 494.

<sup>159</sup> Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 304; Smith, *Double Talk*, 468.

<sup>160</sup> In Tal, ““Absolutes” and “Stages”,’ 1108.

control. Rather, as Arvid Schors has illustrated, they claimed that the developing satellite technology enabling the adoption of the National Technical Means (NTM) of verification had superseded the need for trust in nuclear arms control.<sup>161</sup>

Indeed, while endeavouring domestically to portray himself as a rational, competent and responsible actor in whom the American public should place their trust, internationally he attempted to send signals to antagonists that he was quite the opposite. Nixon's 'madman theory' involved the threat of excessive, even nuclear, aggression as a coercive tactic towards the Soviet Union and North Vietnam. It was a bluff, and thus its success would require leaders in Moscow and Hanoi to believe that Nixon was an irrational and unpredictable actor, an unhinged anti-communist whose fanaticism overpowered his sense of consequences in the use of massive force. He explained the theory to Haldeman:

I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do *anything* to stop the war [emphasis in original]. We'll just slip the word to them that, "for God's sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communism. We can't restrain him when he's angry--and he has his hand on the nuclear button."<sup>162</sup>

Nixon tried to communicate this through action including increasing US nuclear readiness in the autumn of 1969 as a message to the Soviet Union that he was willing to 'use extreme force to bring the Vietnam conflict to an end'.<sup>163</sup> According to Klein 'one of the assets he [Nixon] coveted was that the international opposition was never quite certain how he would react.'<sup>164</sup> In this way, Nixon's international persona, at least with his opponents, was deliberately untrustworthy and irrational. It is another irony of this analysis that, while portraying himself as a trustworthy leader domestically, Nixon was simultaneously signalling that he was an unpredictable and untrustworthy partner in the international realm.

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<sup>161</sup> Arvid Schors, 'Trust and Mistrust and the American Struggle for Verification of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), 1969-79,' unpublished paper presented at the "Trust, but Verify" Confidence and Distrust from Détente to the End of the Cold War Conference, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars and German Historical Institute, Washington DC, 7-9 November, 2011.

<sup>162</sup> Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War*, 76.

<sup>163</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 114. This was anticipated by Thomas Schelling who theorised the 'manipulation of risk.' For a discussion of the origins of this see Jeffrey Kimball, 'Did Thomas C. Schelling Invent the Madman Theory?' History News Network (HNN) <http://hnn.us/article/17183> Last accessed 8 February, 2014.

<sup>164</sup> Klein, *Making it Perfectly Clear*, 399.

## Conclusion

Through a grammatical investigation of trust and nuclear arms during the Nixon administration, this chapter has shown how President Nixon talked about trust in a particular way in order to accomplish certain political goals. It has also shown that, because Nixon's meaning for trust was located within a wider political and historical context, Nixon's trust had little to do with character, values or personal relationships, and was instead based on the idealisation of knowledge and facts, an acknowledgement of responsibility and power, and compliance with Nixon's authority as the president. The grammar of trust in this context was reflective of the administration's wider political language, which talked about Nixon as a great world leader and was connected to other words such as 'responsibility', 'intelligence', 'facts', 'information' and 'judgement'. This grammar of trust was shaped by Nixon's approach to governance in the realm of foreign policy and national security, US political culture, the current political climate and his response to the demands of foreign policy and national security in a nuclear era.

The chapter illustrated this through an analysis of the political battle over deployment of the Safeguard ABM system in Nixon's first years in office. Nixon had inherited an ABM deployment programme that was already the subject of contestation and which, due to the conflicted nature of its origins, contained certain inbuilt inconsistencies and flaws. When an active and high-profile anti-ABM scientific community joined with local groups and politicians concerned about missiles in their communities, this caught the attention of a divided public that was tired of the Vietnam War, and a Congress that were increasingly wary of defence spending and questioning the Cold War consensus and the traditional presidential prerogatives on foreign policy decision-making.

On reaching the White House, Nixon further damaged the strategic and technical coherence of the proposed ABM system. His administration's operational compromises and multiple, often contradictory, rationales for deployment of the amended and newly christened Safeguard system further undermined its credibility. By allowing political concerns to influence not only the public justification for deployment but also the nature of the system itself, Nixon's decisions weakened the technical and strategic arguments for Safeguard.

Unable to answer the technological, strategic and political questions about the planned deployment, Nixon's ultimate response was to try to stop people from asking

questions at all. Nixon instead began to talk about ABM in terms of trust. This grammatical investigation has shown that regarding ABM and the wider issue of nuclear arms and arms control, the Nixon administration used a very specific meaning for the word 'trust'. This meaning for trust was located in its use and thus best understood with reference to its place, its speaker and its function. The irony in this use of trust was that the focus on knowledge, judgement and facts in this Nixonian trust was undermined by the fact that the type of ABM deployment Nixon was trying to justify contained several strategic and technical contradictions that were a result of ignoring scientific advice and instead basing decisions on domestic political manoeuvring. Indeed, by attempting to move his request for trust out of the current political context and attach it instead to a timeless tradition of trust in presidential authority, Nixon himself was endeavouring to dehistoricise his public meaning for trust in the very way that this thesis has identified as problematic in the International Relations trust literature.

The following chapter will show how President Reagan's grammar of trust, though dissimilar to Nixon's, was also shaped by US political culture, the contemporary political context and the political imperatives of the nuclear revolution, and therefore how trust in the Reagan era is also best understood in context and through use.

## **‘Trust the people,’ Reagan, trust and nuclear arms control**

*Trust is a key. Everyone trusts Mr. Reagan as a person. He is so obviously sincere. He believes all those things he says. There is none of the defensiveness in him of a Nixon; he is confident and easy. And he has proof that dreams can win over facts, because his own dream came true.*

- *New York Times*, 1985 <sup>1</sup>

*Reagan does not argue for American values; he embodies them...he renews our past by resuming it. His approach is not discursive, setting up sequences of time or thought, but associative; not a tracking shot but montage.*

- *Garry Wills* <sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

This chapter conducts a grammatical investigation into President Ronald Reagan's use of trust regarding nuclear arms and nuclear arms control during his second term in office. It illustrates how the particular meaning for trust used publicly by President Reagan was shaped by the contemporary political climate, Reagan's particular role in US political culture and the imperatives placed on politics by the nuclear revolution. It then argues that President Reagan used this particular meaning for trust to describe the process of nuclear arms control undertaken in his second term as a narrative of trust and thereby achieve specific political goals. The chapter describes how Reagan's meaning for trust therefore played an important and consistent part in the Reagan administration's public diplomacy efforts in the years 1985-1989, providing a means of dealing with the disingenuous nature of foreign policy rhetoric in a nuclear era.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Lewis, 'Abroad at Home: In the Emerald City,' *New York Times*, 31 March, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Garry Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents At Home* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 4.

The first section of the chapter briefly explains why this research focuses on Reagan's second term and describes the various inhibiting factors that meant little progress on arms control occurred early in the Reagan presidency, as well as how this changed as Reagan's first term progressed. The chapter then illustrates how Reagan closely associated himself with a particular meaning for trust throughout his presidency and how he consistently made use of this distinctive meaning for trust in his political vocabulary. This particular meaning for trust was founded on nostalgia for American traditional and conservative values and was a reflection of the context of the Reagan presidency in a post-Vietnam and post-Watergate United States as well as within a wider background of American political culture. Reagan's grammar of trust included words such as 'freedom', 'people', 'faith', 'liberty' and 'democracy'. Reagan used trust, as associated with these words in many of his speeches and domestic campaigns, most commonly in variants of the phrase 'trust the people'.

The chapter will then illustrate how Reagan's use of trust was also influenced by his approach to dealing with politics in a nuclear age. It will show how Reagan portrayed the problem of the nuclear age as a problem of trust; connecting his use of trust to his specific response to the imperatives of the nuclear revolution on the international realm. Reagan expressed this through conceptualising nuclear weapons as the outcome of a lack of trust in the international realm rather than the generator of a lack of trust in the international realm. As Reagan's second term commenced and the United States and the Soviet Union began to engage more on issues of nuclear arms control, Reagan began to use this connection of trust and the problems of nuclear arms for trust more often in the international realm. Reagan was able to talk about the arms control process as a narrative of trust and trustworthiness. By talking about trust in relation to traditional American values and his meaning for trust as 'trust the people', Reagan attempted to create a discourse in which the trustworthiness of the United States as a nuclear power was presumed but the trustworthiness of the Soviet Union had to be constantly proven. He then adapted this message to address whatever issue was problematic for the United States at the time, so that his meaning for trust also became a valuable part of the administration's public diplomacy efforts.

This chapter will illustrate how President Reagan first talked about trust in relation to the administration's highly publicised charges of Soviet noncompliance with previous international arms control treaties. As the White House decided whether to continue to

abide by the limits of the unratified SALT II treaty during 1985 and 1986, it made use of the idea of Soviet untrustworthiness to validate any decision it would make. Reagan framed the issue as one of trust and portrayed the Soviet Union as innately untrustworthy because of Moscow's alleged history of noncompliance with international treaties. When this issue receded and the political focus switched to how Washington would publicly deal with the positive arms control proposals offered by a new and energetic CPSU General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, Reagan also changed how he talked about trust regarding nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union. Reagan began to talk about trust within a wider language of freedom and the issue of human rights in the Soviet Union, and used this to place Gorbachev's arms control proposals within a broader political context. The chapter will show how Reagan described arms control as inextricably linked to trust and specifically his version of trust as 'trust the people', alleging that the government of the Soviet Union did not trust its people and therefore could not itself be trusted.

Through these examples, the chapter will describe how President Reagan was able to take the idea of 'trust the people' and the inherent trustworthiness of the United States that was a central theme of his political speech and use it as a political attribute, both domestically and within Congress as well as in the realm of the international public diplomacy battle with the Soviet Union. Trust was also a language through which Reagan could negotiate between the conflicting concerns of his domestic constituencies, from arms control advocates who demanded more cooperation with the Soviet Union, to hard-line arms control sceptics. The chapter therefore demonstrates how taking a grammatical approach to the study and meaning of trust during this period can illuminate certain political dynamics that existed at that time and that might be overlooked by merely accepting and explaining the narrative that of this era as one where trust 'played a role'. Rather, it argues that the Reagan administration made a decision to talk about arms control in relation to a specific and context-bound meaning for trust.

### **President Reagan's first term**

Unlike Nixon, Reagan had prominently talked about the trust throughout his political career, but it would be 1985 before he began to significantly use the word in relation to international arms control with the Soviet Union. This chapter therefore focuses on the second term of the Reagan presidency. The following section will briefly explain the



reason for this focus and the exclusion of President Reagan's first term in office and will outline the various pressures that led to a more accommodating stance towards the Soviet Union within the Reagan White House and a softening of the president's language from 1984 onwards.

In Reagan's first term there was little forward movement on nuclear arms control, or indeed on any aspect of the US-Soviet relationship. Critics on both the left and the right argued that the promises of détente of the early 1970s were largely unrealised and the arms control process had stalled.<sup>3</sup> Following the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan six months after the signing of SALT II, President Carter requested that the Senate suspend its consideration of the Treaty.<sup>4</sup> The acceptance of the Nixonian vision of the Cold War had been increasingly challenged from both right and left.<sup>5</sup> Incoming President Ronald Reagan had built his career on a history of strong anti-communist rhetoric and had spent much of the presidential campaign attacking President Carter's foreign policy, especially his policy towards the Soviet Union and weakness on issues such as the Panama Canal, the invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian Hostage crisis and the SALT II Treaty. On reaching office, Reagan continued with what Frances Fitzgerald describes as a 'wave of hyperbole' regarding the Soviet threat in order to maintain support for his plans for a buildup in military spending.<sup>6</sup> Reagan's aggressive rhetoric towards the Soviet Union, most famously

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<sup>3</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*, 80.

<sup>4</sup> Philip J. Farley, 'Strategic Arms Control 1967-87,' in Alexander L. George, Philip J. Farley, Alexander Dallin, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation, Achievements, Failures, Lessons* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 236-237.

<sup>5</sup> This included criticism from former members of Nixon's administration such as Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, conservative criticism as spearheaded by Reagan, and criticism from democratic hawks such as Senator Henry Jackson, Eugene Rostow and Paul Nitze. See Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition, American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994); Melanson, *American Foreign policy since the Vietnam War*, 80; Wills, *Reagan's America*, 335. For a discussion of the conservative influence on Reagan's foreign policy see Gillian Peele, 'The Agenda of the New Right,' in Dilys M. Hill, Raymond A. Moore, Phil Williams, eds., *The Reagan Presidency: An Incomplete Revolution?* (London: Macmillan, 1990): 29-48.

<sup>6</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 99. In its first military budget in 1981 the Reagan administration requested an increase of \$33.8 billion and subsequent yearly increases of 7%. Casper Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990). Reagan's presidential campaign included many members of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), formed in 1975 to alert the US public to the Soviet threat and lobby for an increased military buildup. Though his pronounced anti-communism predated their association, the CPD effectively functioned as Reagan presidential campaign's 'brain trust for defense and foreign policy', Fitzgerald, *Way Out There*, 98. However, it should be noted that President Carter had already begun a large military build up in his last year in office and, while Reagan's defence increases were not insignificant, they were also continuing a trend started in Carter's last year in office. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

encapsulated in the 'Evil Empire' address,<sup>7</sup> his administration's antipathy towards the idea of arms control and belief in the need for a US military build-up were deleterious to any progress in nuclear arms control and to US-Soviet relations in general in his first years in office.<sup>8</sup>

Although Reagan certainly had an ideological antipathy towards the Soviet Union, there were also political and practical reasons for not pressing for US-Soviet rapprochement. Firstly, President Reagan entered office determined to focus on domestic issues and especially on the economy; this was where his interest lay and polling showed that the number one public concern was the economy, specifically high inflation.<sup>9</sup> In the first year, his administration's main priority was thus to manage inflation and institute a large tax cut, and domestic issues remained higher on the White House agenda than foreign policy throughout the first term.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, even if Reagan had wanted to move forward with the US-Soviet relationship, it would have been difficult given the bureaucratic obstacles within the administration. There was little consensus on foreign policy and even less control over its direction in the early years of the Reagan White House.<sup>11</sup> Reagan lacked a leader within his administration to drive policy, which, given his own indifference to international issues at the time, would have been necessary to create and maintain a coherent strategy in foreign affairs. Conflicts between the State and Defense Departments and between the White

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<sup>7</sup> Reagan famously used this phrase during a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals. Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, 8 March, 1983, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41023>. Last accessed 10 February, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the Reagan administration's first term attitudes towards arms control see Strobe Talbott, *U.S.-Soviet Nuclear Arms Control: Where We Are and How We Got There*, RAND/UCLA Centre for the Study of Soviet International Behaviour, Occasional Paper OCS-001 (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1985). [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers-soviet/2007/OPS001.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers-soviet/2007/OPS001.pdf) Last accessed 29 October, 2013. For an account of the 1983 Able Archer incident at the height of these tensions see Vojtech Mastny, 'How Able Was "Able Archer"? Nuclear Trigger and Intelligence in Perspective,' *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no.1 (2009): 108-123.

<sup>9</sup> Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of A Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 1991), 56.

<sup>10</sup> Wills, *Reagan's America*, 345.

<sup>11</sup> In May 1982 the administration produced NSDD 32, which set policy towards the Soviet Union. NSDD 32 concentrated on the build up of American military forces, maintaining US deterrence, and strengthening alliances with the ultimate goal of rolling back Soviet international influence and encouraging 'liberalizing and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union.' *U.S. National Security Strategy (NSC-NSDD-32)* 20 May, 1982. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/NSDDs.html#Uz0xSKhdWbs> Last accessed 3 April, 2014. Reagan articulated this strategy in a subsequent speech to members of the British Parliament where he famously declared having a plan that would 'leave Marxism-Leninism on the ashheap of history'. Ronald Reagan, Address to Members of the British Parliament, 8 June, 1982, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42614>. Last accessed 29 July, 2013.

House and Congress regarding arms control and the Soviet Union thus remained unresolved, and according to Strobe Talbott, this became ‘disruptive and often paralyzing in the Reagan administration’.<sup>12</sup> Reagan’s closest advisors, Chief of Staff James Baker, his Deputy Mike Deaver and Counselor Edwin Meese, had little experience in foreign policy.<sup>13</sup> Without direction from the top, the only constants in the first years of the administration were the consistently hard-line anti-Soviet rhetoric and focus on the military build-up.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless, moving forward on nuclear arms issues with the Soviet Union may still have been a challenge because of various international factors. Firstly, the Soviet Union itself lacked stable leadership at the highest levels in the early eighties with a succession of aging leaders of varying degrees of obsolescence holding the reins of power. Secondly, any movement in US-Soviet relations was also inhibited by several controversial events that occurred during the early Reagan period. In November of 1983, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deployment of INF forces in Europe as per the 1979 dual track decision resulted in a Soviet Union walkout of arms control negotiations. Diplomatic incidents such as the Soviet shooting down of unarmed South Korean civilian airliner, which Soviet authorities mistakenly assumed was a US spy plane, also contributed to the acrimonious atmosphere.<sup>15</sup> For these reasons, the early Reagan years are not of great significance for the purpose of this investigation.

### **Reagan’s second term: a change in approach**

Several converging events and the emergence of political pressures during Reagan’s first term led to a perhaps unlikely and unexpected focus on working with the Soviet Union on nuclear arms control issues in Reagan’s second term and an accompanying use of trust to achieve certain political goals within this arena. This came from a combination of domestic political challenges, bureaucratic changes and international pressures.

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<sup>12</sup> Talbott, *U.S.-Soviet Nuclear Arms Control*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> See Robert C. McFarlane, *Special Trust* (New York: Cadell and Davies, 1994), 172; Cannon, *President Reagan*, 155.

<sup>14</sup> This reading of events and of the tone of early Reagan rhetoric is disputed by Jack F. Matlock, Member of the NSC and Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1987-1991 who questioned what he termed the myth of the Reagan transformation and his first term belligerence towards the Soviet Union. See Jack F. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev, How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 228-229; Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 118-130.

Firstly, growing domestic political opposition placed pressure on the administration to publicly adopt a more cooperative stance. Anti-nuclear movements in the United States and Western Europe, alarmed by the President's hostile rhetoric towards the Soviet Union, his talk of winning a nuclear war and his increases in defence spending, grew in strength during the first years of the Reagan administration. The nuclear freeze movement was of particular concern to the administration. The freeze movement developed from a proposal by the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies in 1980 that the United States and the Soviet Union immediately freeze their levels of nuclear weapons and abandon any further testing, production or deployment.<sup>16</sup> While the campaign eventually lost direction, at its high point the freeze movement was a powerful voice in the nuclear weapons debate and was a source of unease for the administration.<sup>17</sup> The Catholic Church, also concerned about the rhetoric coming from the White House, joined the freeze movement in its opposition to the administration's stance on nuclear weapons.<sup>18</sup> In internal correspondence, the administration acknowledged that the issue of nuclear arms control with the Soviet Union was 'a domestic political issue as well as a foreign policy issue', and tried to push back on public opinion.<sup>19</sup>

The White House also began to face opposition from Congress and some resistance to increases in US defence spending, including Reagan's strategic modernisation plan, which was to cost \$180 billion over a six-year period.<sup>20</sup> This opposition coalesced into a challenge to the president's basing plans for the long-troubled MX missile. Debates over how to base this missile pre-dated the Reagan presidency but his various early proposals faced resistance in Congress. Congress rejected Reagan's multiple MX proposals and in

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<sup>16</sup> Donald Baucom, *The Origins of SDI, 1944-1983* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 182; Hugh Mehan, Charles E. Nathanson, and James M. Skelly, 'Nuclear Discourse in the 1980s: The Unravelling Conventions of the Cold War,' *Discourse and Society* 1, no. 2, (1990): 146.

<sup>17</sup> In June of 1983, 750,000 people marched in New York in support of the movement. Mehan et al, 'Nuclear Discourse in the 1980's,' 133.

<sup>18</sup> Jim Castelli, *The Bishops and the Bomb* (New York: Image Books, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> A Public Affairs Policy to Support the Administration's Nuclear Policy, June 1982, Robert C McFarlane Files Box 7, Arms Control-Nuclear Freeze (2), The Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California (hereafter Reagan Library). The administration's concern about the wider international implications of the freeze movement can be seen also in a memorandum from McFarlane to National Security Advisor William 'Judge' Clark, which stated that it 'will seriously undermine our negotiations with The Soviets as well as with our allies who will be urging that we make concessions (in response to their own freeze movements)'. McFarlane to Judge Clark, 28 August, 1982, Robert C McFarlane Files Box 7, Arms Control-Nuclear Freeze (6) Reagan Library.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Farley, 'Strategic Arms Control, 1967-87,' in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*; Phil Williams 'The Reagan Administration and Defence Policy,' in Hill et al, eds., *The Reagan Presidency: An Incomplete Revolution?*

December 1982 the House voted 245-176 in favour of dropping all spending on MX missile production from the military budget.<sup>21</sup> This vote represented a public show of no confidence in the Reagan defence spending agenda and administration officials interpreted it as a sign that the White House was losing public legitimacy on a strategic policy that, as Donald Baucom says, was 'in disarray'.<sup>22</sup>

Changes within the first Reagan administration also facilitated later movement on nuclear arms control issues with the Soviet Union, although there remained differences on foreign policy within the administration throughout Reagan's two terms. Firstly, George Shultz replaced Alexander Haig as Secretary of State in 1982. Shultz was in favour of increasing dialogue with Moscow and, importantly, slowly began to get access to Reagan to promote this view.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, when in October 1983 Robert McFarlane became NSA, he replaced one of the more hard-line administration members, Bill Clark, thereby giving Shultz more direct and frequent access to the president.<sup>24</sup>

A further pressure on Reagan to engage with the Soviet Union on nuclear issues (or at least to be seen to be doing so) came from his campaign for re-election in 1984. Reagan was doing well in public polling on domestic and economic issues, and had a job approval rating of 53% by early 1984.<sup>25</sup> However, Reagan's bellicose rhetoric throughout his first term with regard to the Soviet Union and his apparent inflexibility on nuclear arms control were dragging his approval rating down in national surveys. As Reagan's pollster and friend Richard Wirthlin later wrote,

[s]ome Americans do become nervous when his rhetoric and positioning become more confrontational. The Evil Empire speech, his limited nuclear war statement

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<sup>21</sup> Reagan's suggestions included placing the missiles in hardened Minuteman silos for an interim period, an air-launched missile, and a final deployment proposal called 'Dense Pack', where the missiles would be placed in a close formation relying on the idea of fratricide of incoming Soviet missiles to ensure a percentage survivability. Cannon, *President Reagan*, 279; Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 189

<sup>22</sup> Baucom, *Origins of SDI*, 180.

<sup>23</sup> George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 159. See also Cannon, *President Reagan*, 264, for an account of what is often termed the administration 'pragmatists', Shultz, McFarlane, Deaver, Vice President George H. W. Bush and First Lady Nancy Reagan, versus the 'hard-liners' Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, Clark, Director of the CIA William Casey, Jeane Kirkpatrick and Ed Meese.

<sup>24</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 233. This was also facilitated by the relationship that Shultz had with Mike Deaver see Cannon, *President Reagan*, 166-7. Matlock has argued that it was not Clark that held up Shultz's access to the president in early days but the inefficiencies of the process of interagency consultation and the president's own ambiguity about many of the issues.' Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 62.

<sup>25</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 234.

and his August 1984 comment [a joke about the bombing of Russia beginning in five minutes], for example, all have put some Americans' teeth on edge.<sup>26</sup>

In a memorandum drafted in late September 1983, Wirthlin suggested that 'a year from now the claim that the Reagan administration has maintained the peace would be fortified if we could show some progress in negotiating an arms settlement.'<sup>27</sup>

The growing domestic pressures on the US government to negotiate were reinforced by pressure from US allies in Western Europe linked to specific nuclear weapons issues. In 1979, NATO had decided to deploy US Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles on the territory of key NATO states to counter the threat from the Soviet Union's SS-20 intermediate range missiles and strengthen US nuclear reassurance of its West-European allies (so-called 'coupling'). This was a particularly sensitive issue for those West-European members of NATO that had agreed to their deployment. Both British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl were worried that deployment without at least the show of a more accommodating offer on INF to the Soviet Union would result in European protests 'strong enough' as Fitzgerald states, 'to topple West European governments and shake the foundations of NATO.'<sup>28</sup>

The administration also received pushback from Europe on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), the Reagan administration's plan to place nuclear defences in space. The implications of SDI for the effectiveness of the British and French national nuclear deterrents, US extended deterrence, and the ABM Treaty, long a cornerstone of the concept of a détente that had survived longer in Europe than in the United States, worried European leaders.<sup>29</sup> A White House internal communication acknowledged that '[i]n Europe all four

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<sup>26</sup> Wirthlin quoted in Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 271.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 236. A letter briefing British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher before her visit to Washington in 1983 made a similar point that movement on nuclear arms control 'could be a significant electoral bonus' in the presidential election. It also pointed out that Reagan had used the deterioration in relations between the superpowers to 'get Congressional approach for a further 5% real term increase in defense spending and to advance the prospects for Congressional funding of key projects such as MX and the B1 bomber.' Letter from B.J.P. Fall, 21 September, 1983, PREM 19/1153, The National Archives, Kew.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>29</sup> For a full review of European attitudes to BMD see David Yost, 'BMD and the Atlantic Alliance,' in Steven Miller and Stephen Van Evera, eds., *The Star Wars Controversy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

political elements, i.e., public opinion, media opinion, parliamentary opinion, and most of government opinion are against SDI'.<sup>30</sup>

These specific areas of disquiet were part of a wider European public feeling that the United States and Ronald Reagan in particular were simply not interested in pursuing arms control with the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of people took part in demonstrations against nuclear weapons on the streets of various European and the tone of the protests was described by Strobe Talbott as 'more anti-American than anti-Soviet'.<sup>31</sup> In a memorandum to Clark and McFarlane, NSC staffer Mort Allen expressed concern that

the prevailing view here and abroad that RR is not serious about arms control, won't compromise, that the policy is in disarray with major splits in the administration...the Soviets have stolen the peace initiative from RR and are pounding us in the propaganda war.

A handwritten note on the memorandum from Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Bob Sims described it as 'an excellent review of the problem'.<sup>32</sup> The strength of popular feeling in Europe and the thought of losing sympathetic leaders in the United Kingdom and West Germany were significant concerns for the administration that even eclipsed concerns about US public opinion.<sup>33</sup>

The White House considered these varying political pressures as important in how it would publicly deal with the issue of nuclear arms control and foreign policy as the Reagan presidency progressed. Reagan was compelled to negotiate between these concerns and to address them publicly as he came towards the end of his first term and continued into the second. The following sections of the chapter will show how he attempted this partly through talking about these issues with regard to a particular, context bound meaning for trust. It will illustrate how Reagan used a specific meaning for trust that was intimately bound up in his political persona, the political context and US political culture and that had been a longstanding feature of his domestic rhetoric in order to publicly

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<sup>30</sup> Public Diplomacy Themes Relevant To September 18<sup>th</sup> Vienna Talks, 18 July, 1984, Executive Secretariat NSC-System Files 8101801-8491337, Folder 8490785, Reagan Library.

<sup>31</sup> Strobe Talbot, *Deadly Gambits: The Reagan Administration and the Stalemate in Nuclear Arms Control* (London: Pan Books, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> Mort Allin to Judge Clark and Bud McFarlane, 13 January, 1983, Executive Secretariat NSC-Subject Files Content A-Box 3, Arms Control 03-01-83 01-20-83, Reagan Library.

<sup>33</sup> According to David Gergen, Reagan's Director of Communications, 'it was never as intense here as it was in Europe...We were worried about losing these governments.' Quoted in Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee*, 272.

negotiate the demands of foreign policy in a nuclear era and the changing US relationship with the Soviet Union.

### **Trust, US political culture and the American jeremiad**

While there was little movement or accommodation on arms control issues between the United States and the Soviet Union in the years before 1985, Reagan had always talked about trust throughout his political career. Reagan's grammar of trust included words such as 'freedom', 'people', 'liberty', 'democracy' and 'faith', and he closely associated himself with a particular meaning for trust that was connected to traditional and conservative American values. This section of the chapter will outline the meaning for trust that Reagan invoked. It will illustrate its place in his general political vocabulary and show how the context of Reagan's presidency in the political culture and contemporary political context of the United States shaped this particular meaning for trust.

Reagan's political strengths of perceived trustworthiness and strong personal values informed his meaning for trust, but it was also shaped by the context within which Reagan ascended to the presidency. Dilys M. Hill and Phil Williams have described the US public's perception of the 1970s as 'a decade in which the United States had lost a war, in which the presidency had been discredited and in which there was a general sense of malaise and decline.'<sup>34</sup> As with Richard Nixon, this context informed how the president was able to make use of the language of trust, and Reagan's trust, with its inherent confidence, found a receptive audience with the American public.

Reagan came into office after a period of disillusionment with politicians and the political system and a more antagonistic relationship between the White House and the media post-Watergate and Vietnam.<sup>35</sup> By the time of the 1980 presidential election, high inflation, unemployment, petrol shortages and perceived foreign policy embarrassments such as the ongoing Iranian hostage situation had all contributed to what President Carter had (perhaps misguidedly) labelled a 'crisis of confidence' in July of 1979.<sup>36</sup> President

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<sup>34</sup> Dilys M. Hill and Phil Williams, 'The Reagan Presidency: Style and Substance,' in Hill et al, eds., *The Reagan Presidency, An Incomplete Revolution?*

<sup>35</sup> Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee*, 19.

<sup>36</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider, 'The Decline of Confidence in American Institutions,' *Political Science Quarterly* 98, no. 3 (1983): 379-402; Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the*



Carter had made the mistake of speaking about the limits of American power to a public that, according to Phil Williams, 'were simply unwilling to accept that American foreign policy had to operate in an age of limits.'<sup>37</sup> It was thus an opportune time for a politician who could convincingly speak of optimism, American greatness and trust. Reagan often therefore publicly contrasted himself with the leaders 'back in the late seventies' a time when 'we'd lost respect overseas, and we no longer trusted our leaders to defend peace and freedom'.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to these past leaders, Reagan presented himself as a president who could revive traditional American values and dismantle this public perception of stagnation, and as a President who simply refused the idea of any limits on American power. His chief political selling point was his outsider status, which fit well with the US political ideals of liberty and rugged individualism. He had positioned himself in his first political campaign for Governor of California as 'the outsider' and, even after two terms in Sacramento and two terms in the White House, was able to retain this aura of otherness to Washington and to government. Reagan was not just able to relate himself to the American everyman but with the idea of America as a whole, as an embodiment of American values and morals. He thus presented himself to the US public as both 'one of us' and 'all of us'. An example of this can be seen in the television coverage of his 1981 inaugural address, the first to be held on the west steps of the Capitol looking out onto the National Mall, which was intercut with images of the stone monuments to America's greatness and unique destiny in the world. According to Jamieson, Reagan was able to credibly inhabit the role of 'national narrator', and in this role could tell the story of America and make it also the story of Ronald Reagan in a way that many others have tried both before and since, though few with such success.<sup>39</sup>

President Reagan's presentation of himself as the embodiment of all that was great about the United States was enhanced by what Kurt Ritter and David Green described as

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*Vietnam War*, 80; Robert A. Strong, 'Recapturing Leadership: The Carter Administration and the Crisis of Confidence,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1986): 636-650.

<sup>37</sup> Phil Williams, 'The limits of American power: from Nixon to Reagan,' *International Affairs* 63, no. 4 (1987): 579.

<sup>38</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a White House Luncheon for Elected Republican Women Officials, 12 March, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39622>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

his 'pastoral' style of speaking.<sup>40</sup> His speeches were often about everyday American people and traditional values and were told in the form of fables and anecdotes. The overarching theme was that of optimism and America's destiny. It was a secular jeremiad of the American people, who had been chosen to play a unique role in the world and therefore possessed unique characteristics. This rhetoric tapped into a deep historical link between US political culture and religious language, specifically the ideas of the Puritans which 'derived from this tradition', according to Werner Schmidt, 'a sense of uniqueness, a conviction of being a land of manifest destiny, invested with a higher morality than other nations and hence bound to its mission.'<sup>41</sup>

Reagan also made use of narratives of damnation and salvation taken from this religious tradition. He habitually spoke about the apocalypse and his often biblically inspired rhetoric was full of Christian-based images of evil and threats to America.<sup>42</sup> However, the overall message was one of optimism. As long as America did not stray too far from its traditional ideals as a conservative, Christian nation of free individuals, the end would be victory and salvation rather than destruction.<sup>43</sup> In the struggle of American values against those of communism there would only ever be one winner. This preternaturally optimistic attitude can be seen in an excerpt from a commencement address that Reagan gave at Notre Dame University in May 1981:

The years ahead are great ones for this country, for the cause of freedom and the spread of civilization. The West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to dismiss or denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written.<sup>44</sup>

This type of political rhetoric had developed from what was known as 'The Speech'. This was an address Reagan had given hundreds of times around the country during his time as a corporate spokesperson for General Electric (GE), and that had first

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<sup>40</sup> Kurt Ritter and David Henry Green, *Ronald Reagan: The Great Communicator* (New York: Wood Press, 1992), 61.

<sup>41</sup> Werner Schmidt, 'Ronald Reagan and his Rhetoric in Foreign Policy,' in Helga Haftendorn and Jakob Schissler, eds., *The Reagan Administration: A Reconstruction of American Strength?* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 78. For more on Reagan and the secular jeremiad see Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999); Erickson, *Reagan Speaks*; Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age*; Ritter and Henry, *Ronald Reagan: The Great Communicator*.

<sup>42</sup> See Cannon, *President Reagan*, 247-250; Erikson, *Reagan Speaks*, 86; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, 228; Ritter and Green, *The Great Communicator*, xiii.

<sup>43</sup> Wills, *Reagan's America*, 385.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame, 17 May, 1981, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43825>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

been exhibited to a national audience during a paid televised broadcast as part of Barry Goldwater's unsuccessful 1964 presidential campaign.<sup>45</sup> This speech warned against the dangers of communism, 'the most evil enemy mankind has known', as well as the menace of big government's mission to interfere with American life and freedoms.<sup>46</sup> Reagan linked these dangers together as the terrible, twin enemies of America.

This language was not unusual in US Cold War rhetoric of course, but Reagan was a master of the form, with years of practice as an actor and giving the speech to multiple audiences for GE. He was able to credibly inhabit the role of the everyday American in opposition to the double socialist peril of the Soviet Union and the encroachment of big government, what Wills has characterised as the 'slow invisible tide of socialism [that] was engulfing America.'<sup>47</sup> Reagan portrayed himself as a 'citizen politician', the people's representative in Washington who, as Fitzgerald describes, 'ran for office to restore common sense and common decency to a government which had grown too big, too complex and too far removed from the concerns of average Americans.'<sup>48</sup> He had not travelled abroad much and had little foreign policy experience, but he used this very provincialism as a way to bond with other ordinary Americans.<sup>49</sup> He reinforced this image in the form of his public speech, which was mostly plain and informal and thus emphasised the everyman assertions of its content.<sup>50</sup>

The meaning for trust that Reagan would eventually use to great effect in the process of nuclear arms negotiations with the Soviet Union was thus shaped by this contemporary post-Vietnam and post-Watergate political context, US political culture with its historical links to puritan religious speech and Reagan's ability to place himself within that culture as 'the American everyman'. As president, Reagan's speech was primed to take advantage of both his association with the American people and perceived good character and trustworthiness, and his meaning for trust in public speech was a reflection of this.

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<sup>45</sup> Cannon, *President Reagan*, 71; Wills, *Reagan's America*, 287-288.

<sup>46</sup> Paul D. Erickson, *Reagan Speaks: The Making of an American Myth* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 23.

<sup>47</sup> Wills, *Reagan's America*, 283.

<sup>48</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 28.

<sup>49</sup> Wills, *Reagan's America*, 351.

<sup>50</sup> Kathleen Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Jamieson argues that even in his first inaugural address, Reagan used contractions, incomplete sentences and other informal attributes that promoted this idea of ordinary speech.

When Reagan spoke of trust it was, therefore, most often in relations to words such as ‘freedom’, ‘people’, ‘liberty’, ‘democracy’ and ‘faith’. This was Reagan’s grammar of trust, one that was linked to the values of conservative America. Reagan’s trust was therefore a traditionally ‘American’ concept. His most repeated saying regarding trust was not the famous and often repeated ‘trust but verify’, but rather ‘trust the people’.<sup>51</sup> He made prominent use of the idea of ‘trust the people’ throughout his time in office, and in his speeches he often distinguished between the natural trustworthiness of the ordinary person and the untrustworthiness and injurious nature of big government. In a typical address in 1984, he suggested that ‘the doom-criers will always be with us. And they’ll always be wrong about America until they realize progress begins with trusting the people.’<sup>52</sup> He would declare that it was ‘time to put trust back in the hands of the people’,<sup>53</sup> and repeatedly claimed that in his administration, ‘[o]ur whole impulse, in all our policies, in all of our administration comes down to this: Trust the people. And we do.’<sup>54</sup>

Crucially, in doing this he made two clear distinctions. Firstly, that this idea of trusting the people was a uniquely and innately American ideal. This can be seen in several of Reagan’s speeches in which he made statements such as ‘[t]rust the people—this is the crucial lesson of history and America’s message to the world’,<sup>55</sup> and ‘America has a secret weapon; it’s called “trust the people.”’<sup>56</sup>

Secondly, he implied that the United States had moved away from this American ideal in recent years and it would be his role to bring the country back to its promise of putting trust in the people. Reagan was different from what Mike Deaver labelled in a

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<sup>51</sup> Reagan used the phrase ‘trust but verify’ sixteen times in speeches from 1986-1989. He used the phrase ‘trust the people’ twenty four times. The latter was also part of the Republican Party Platform in the 1988 presidential election. ‘Republican Party Platform of 1988,’ 16 August, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25846>. Last accessed 19 March, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Ronald Reagan, Radio Address to the Nation on the Economic Recovery Program, 21 January, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39983>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Spirit of America Rally in Atlanta, Georgia, 26 January, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40294>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Reagan-Bush Rally in Cincinnati, Ohio, 20 August, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40269> Last accessed 2 August, 2013. Reagan repeated this statement at many of the Reagan-Bush Rallies during the election campaign.

<sup>55</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the National Leadership Forum of the Center for International and Strategic Studies of Georgetown University, 6 April, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39731>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the National Legislative Conference of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, 5 April, 1982, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42368>. Last accessed 6 August, 2013.

campaign memorandum as the ‘four failed presidencies in a row’ that had preceded him.<sup>57</sup> Unlike more recent leaders who had moved the country away from its destiny, he would put the nation back on track to fulfilling the promise of American greatness. This was because, as Reagan claimed in a national radio address, what he represented was ‘leadership that trusts in you and the power of your dreams’.<sup>58</sup> Reagan contrasted this with his opponent in the election. On several occasions he told his audiences that Mondale had recently spoken of trust,

“Trust me,” he said. Well, the last time we trusted his administration, they took five—count ‘em—five economic plans and nearly tripled inflation. Now, by contrast, we trusted the people, and with just one economic program, we cut inflation by two-thirds.<sup>59</sup>

In another speech, Reagan claimed that the economic problems of the late 1970s were ‘brought about by government leaders who for too long were afraid to trust the American people’.<sup>60</sup>

Reagan did not ask the people to trust him as his opponent had; he simply wanted them to trust in themselves. ‘We don’t ask the people to trust us’, he declared at a fundraising dinner in 1983, ‘we say trust yourselves, trust your own values, and working together, we’ll make America great again.’<sup>61</sup> This implied that President Reagan had no need to make this request, because he already possessed the trust of the people, implicitly and effortlessly. Of course, at its heart Reagan’s request was for trust, but it was a much more subtle and effective one than Walter Mondale’s ‘trust me’, or Richard Nixon’s ‘trust the president’ as discussed in the previous chapter. What Reagan did was associate the idea of ‘trust the people’ as an inherently good and American trait, and then associate himself as both the representative of the people (who were naturally trustworthy) and of the American

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<sup>57</sup> First Flights of Media Campaign, 5 April, 1984, Mike Deaver Files Box 67, Campaign 1984 (3), Reagan Library.

<sup>58</sup> Ronald Reagan, Radio Address to the Nation on the Presidential Campaign, 27 October, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39319>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Reagan-Bush Rally in Millersville, Pennsylvania, 29 October, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39320>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Corn Growers Association in Des Moines, Iowa, 2 August, 1982, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42811>. Last accessed 2 August, 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Fundraising Dinner for Senator Strom Thurmond in Columbia, South Carolina, 20 September, 1983, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40487>. Last accessed 6 August, 2013.

values on which this trust was founded. By accepting any of these connections, voters would then find it difficult to separate trusting America and trusting themselves from trusting Reagan.

*'Trust the people' as a presidential campaign*

A clear example of this strategy can be seen in the Reagan campaign for re-election in 1984. This campaign was not about policy; it was, as Williams suggests, 'short on specifics and long on fuzzy thematics'.<sup>62</sup> In a campaign memo, aide Richard Darman suggested this approach:

Paint Reagan as the personification of all that is right with, or heroized by, America. Leave [former Vice-President and Democratic presidential candidate Walter] Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America's idealized image of itself-where a vote against Reagan is, in some subliminal sense, a vote against a mythic AMERICA.<sup>63</sup>

The campaign was able to accomplish this because Reagan had long worked to identify himself with all that was good about America. The campaign communications placed emphasis on the president as 'a trusted, competent caring leader who gets things done.'<sup>64</sup> A document setting out the key themes for the election highlighted that 'Ronald Reagan has restored America's faith in itself', and 'Americans today have a leader they can respect and admire with trust in his instinct and judgement.'<sup>65</sup>

The Reagan campaign therefore placed a great emphasis on trust. As Ed Rollins, National Campaign Director for the Reagan-Bush 1984 campaign, noted,

[e]very poll I saw in 1983 found that people wanted a leader they could trust. More to the point, they already believed Ronald Reagan was the political rarity who lived up to that billing. That's why we developed a simple campaign theme and made it our driving slogan: Leadership you can Trust. It proved remarkably successful;

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<sup>62</sup> Ed Rollins with Tom DeFrank, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms: My Life in American Politics* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 124.

<sup>63</sup> In Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 233.

<sup>64</sup> Reagan-Bush 84 Initial Media Flight, 5 April, 1984, Michael Deaver Files Box 67, Campaign 1984 (3), Reagan Library.

<sup>65</sup> Themes for Campaign '84, undated (April 1984), Michael Deaver Files Box 67, Campaign 1984 (5), Reagan Library.

when we asked Reagan voters after the election why they'd voted for him, 85 percent said it was because he was a leader they trusted to do the right thing.<sup>66</sup>

Dick Wirthlin's polling, conducted over several months in late 1983, also showed similar high numbers of people valued Reagan's trustworthiness. When asked if they agreed or disagreed with the phrase 'Ronald Reagan *can't* be trusted to do the right thing under pressure [emphasis added]' in a series of polls, between 67% to 71% of respondents disagreed.<sup>67</sup> In fact, what worried Gergen, Wirthlin and others about Reagan's negatives on nuclear weapons and his belligerent position towards the Soviet Union in his first term was not that people disagreed with his stance, but that the aggressive rhetoric was causing his traditional strengths of leadership and trustworthiness to slip in polling because it was tarnishing the Reagan brand.<sup>68</sup>

### **'Trust the people' and the imperatives of nuclear politics**

Reagan linked this particular vision of trust and the problem of nuclear weapons in his speech, adapting his meaning for trust as 'trust the people' with its inbuilt ideology to the realm of nuclear politics. For Reagan, not only was the problem of the nuclear age a problem of trust, but his use of trust was one unique to the age and to his specific response to the imperatives of the nuclear revolution in the international realm. Reagan expressed this through conceptualising nuclear weapons as the outcome of a lack of trust in the international realm rather than the generator of a lack of trust in the international realm. The weapons themselves were therefore not the problem; it was the underlying lack of trust between states that had created the problem of nuclear weapons and that needed to be addressed prior to action on nuclear arms. Nuclear weapons were a result of the inability of states to trust each other and this inability was linked to the actions of the Soviet Union.

What this meant was that the Soviet Union would need to prove that it was trustworthy before becoming a partner in arms control, thus placing a set of implicit preconditions on any potential action taken on nuclear weapons by the United States. Because the word 'trust' for Reagan meant the particular type of trust as an American

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<sup>66</sup> Rollins, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms*, 124.

<sup>67</sup> 1984 Presidential Vote, 2 September 1983, Michael Deaver Files Box 65, Dick Wirthlin (1983-1984) 1, Reagan Library.

<sup>68</sup> Dick Wirthlin with Wynton C. Hall, *The Greatest Communicator: What Ronald Reagan Taught Me about Politics, Leadership, and Life* (New York: Wiley, 2004), 120.

value, as ‘trust the people’, for the Soviet Union to be ‘trustworthy’ it would need to demonstrate a particularly American vision of trust. The following sections of the chapter will illustrate how the Reagan administration used the language of trust to advance a particular understanding of international politics in the nuclear age, and how they used this understanding of politics to achieve certain policy goals by linking trust and nuclear weapons in a specific manner.

### *Reagan’s use of trust regarding nuclear arms*

Throughout Reagan’s first term, the administration’s public declarations of its strategy on nuclear weapons were often confused and contradictory. The message coming from the White House reflected the internal differences on policy, according to Mehan et al, the administration ‘had neither a coherent nor a politically viable nuclear weapons strategy...the Administration talked about coupling deterrence with fighting and winning a nuclear war while claiming nuclear war must never be fought.’<sup>69</sup> Reagan’s aim was to maintain support for his increased defence spending plans, but there was little coherence in how he expressed this message. Some of his rhetoric indicated that fighting a nuclear war was an option that he did not consider to be unimaginable, yet his introduction of the concept of the SDI in a speech on March 23 1983 and the accompanying administration statements on strategic defence, completely questioned the morality of the logic of nuclear deterrence.<sup>70</sup>

However, as outlined above, during Reagan’s second term he began to engage further with the Soviet Union on issues of arms control. Reagan also began to increasingly emphasise the importance of trust in the international. This emphasis on trust in the international connected with Reagan’s escalating rhetoric in prominent foreign policy addresses on the damaging nature of mistrust within the superpower nuclear rivalry. In an interview in October 1985, Reagan for the first time used a quote that would become a regular feature of his speech regarding the Soviet Union:

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<sup>69</sup> Mehan et al, ‘Nuclear Discourse in the 1980s,’ 156.

<sup>70</sup> For an outline of the administration’s pronouncements on fighting a nuclear war see Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 149; Mehan et al, ‘Nuclear Discourse in the 1980s,’ 137-138.



I have a little thing here that I copied out of an article the other day, and the author of the article uttered a very great truth: “Nations do not distrust each other because they are armed. They arm themselves because they distrust each other.” Well, I hope that in the summit maybe we can find ways that we can prove by deed—not just words, but by deeds—that there is no need for distrust between us.<sup>71</sup>

He then explained that the means to reduce this distrust was through ‘better communication, more contact, and close attention to make sure both parties fulfil agreements reached.’<sup>72</sup> In another interview before the Geneva Summit in November, Reagan again identified the ‘distrust that causes the problems and causes the situation with regard to nuclear arms negotiations’.<sup>73</sup>

Reagan thus began to make use of this particular meaning for trust in order to achieve political gains in the international realm and specifically in nuclear arms control. He used this language of trust in two different but overlapping ways in relation to nuclear arms control and the Soviet Union, initially regarding the Soviet Union’s compliance with previous arms control treaties and subsequently regarding its record on human rights. Both had the same ultimate goal of maintaining political support for the Reagan administration while undermining Soviet legitimacy as a partner in negotiations, but the specific policy target changed over time. From 1985 through much of 1986, Reagan most often associated trust in the international realm with Soviet compliance, or more specifically Soviet non-compliance, with existing international treaties. During this period, the White House repeatedly accused the Soviet Union of being an untrustworthy partner in arms control because of violations of existing agreements.

As Reagan prepared to meet General Secretary Gorbachev for the first time at the Geneva Summit in late November 1985, he began his speech to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in October with a recollection of the innocent ‘dreams of trust’ that had ‘been shattered’ over the past 40 years. Reagan then explained that the existence of mistrust was largely due to the many Soviet violations of current international treaties. He continued,

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<sup>71</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks in an Interview with Representatives of Soviet News Organizations, Together With Written Responses to Questions, 31 October, 1985, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsbl.edu/ws/?pid=38015>. Last accessed 8 August, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ronald Reagan, Interview With Representatives of the Wire Services, 6 November, 1985, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsbl.edu/ws/?pid=38027>. Last accessed 8 August, 2013

[a]nd therefore, at Geneva we must review the reasons for the current level of mistrust. For example, in 1972 the international community negotiated in good faith a ban on biological and toxin weapons; in 1975 we negotiated the Helsinki accords on human rights and freedoms; and during the decade just past, the United States and the Soviet Union negotiated several agreements on strategic weapons. And yet we feel it will be necessary at Geneva to discuss with the Soviet Union what we believe are violations of a number of the provisions in all of these agreements.<sup>74</sup>

In a speech in December after the summit, he once again brought up the idea of distrust inhibiting arms control saying,

as long as we distrust to the point that there are restrictions on whether you can go in and verify what the other fellow is doing, then you're going to have to be suspicious and believe that those restrictions are based on a desire to not keep the agreement.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, treaty compliance had not been a particularly controversial issue previous to the Reagan administration and several compliance issues within the SALT provisions had been raised and dealt with throughout the 1970s in the Standing Consultative Commission (SCC), the US-Soviet institutional framework set up in 1971 by the SALT provisions to deal with these issues.<sup>76</sup> However, by the mid-1980s the deteriorating political relationship meant that compliance issues were no longer dealt with through the SCC framework, which had lost its purpose as the United States and the Soviet Union instead made tit-for-tat accusations in public. This change, claims Joseph Nye, 'allowed groups opposed to the arms control regime to turn these peripheral questions [of alleged Soviet violations] into central issues, which were used as a litmus test of Soviet reputation and intentions.'<sup>77</sup> By dealing with issues of noncompliance in the public domain rather than through the SCC framework, President Reagan could use any alleged violations to justify other actions that he might have taken to ensure US safety, which included new spending on defence programmes.<sup>78</sup> These actions included the President's decisions regarding the policy of interim restraint throughout 1985 and 1986, which he placed within a framework of Soviet

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<sup>74</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address to the 40th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, 24 October, 1985, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=37963>. Last accessed 8 August, 2013

<sup>75</sup> Ronald Reagan, Question-and-Answer Session with Students at Fallston High School in Fallston, Maryland, 4 December, 1985, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38112>. Last accessed 8 August, 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr. 'Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes,' *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987): 394.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 395

<sup>78</sup> Gloria Duffy, 'Conditions That Affect Arms Control Compliance,' in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 278.

untrustworthiness and noncompliance with existing arms control treaties. The following section will illustrate how Reagan used this connection between his particular, contextual trust and nuclear weapons in the public debate over the administration's policy of interim restraint regarding voluntary adherence to the unratified SALT II Treaty.

### **Trust and interim restraint**

Although the US Senate had never ratified the SALT II Treaty, in 1980 President Carter declared that the United States would abide by the unratified treaty if the Soviet Union reciprocated, and then General Secretary of the CPSU Leonid Brezhnev concurred with this declaration. In May 1982, President Reagan announced that he would maintain the policy of interim restraint if the Soviet Union continued to show equal restraint.<sup>79</sup>

To a certain extent, this policy provided a win-win situation for the Reagan administration early in its first term. Abiding by the limitations of the unratified treaty provided some high moral ground for an administration that was vulnerable on issues of arms control, while not actually being of any detriment to their strategic policy. In a memorandum to the President sent on 3 June 1985, McFarlane described US adherence to SALT limits up to that date as 'fairly painless', stating that that policy prior to 1985 had 'restricted US military systems only marginally and required the dismantling only of relatively aging systems such as the Titan ICBM and the older Polaris submarines that had reached the end of their useful life.' However, the introduction of new Trident submarines in September 1985, the addition of new Air Launched Cruise Missiles (ALCM) onto existing B-52's and the planned MX and Midgetman ICBMs would soon change this situation. McFarlane acknowledged that with these proposed additions, continuing the policy of restraint into the following year could 'become militarily more painful'.<sup>80</sup>

More pressing than the military reasons to reconsider the policy of interim restraint were growing political incentives. In a National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting in March 1986, the Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Admiral William J. Crowe stated that although they had some military preferences, 'at the bottom line, the JCS view

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<sup>79</sup> For a further account of the 1982 interim restraint decision see Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, 222-232.

<sup>80</sup> Robert McFarlane to the President, June 3, 1985, Executive Secretariat NSC Box 12, 91303, NSC 00118 3 June 85 (2/2) Interim Restraint Policy, Reagan Library.

this decision as a political judgement call.’<sup>81</sup> McFarlane described Congress as ‘sharply divided’ on the issue.<sup>82</sup> The White House was under pressure from several conservatives in the House and Senate who objected to the policy of adherence, arguing that the Soviet Union had not shown the necessary reciprocity. This group had been increasingly vocal in their criticism since the 1982 announcement, sending several letters to the president and requesting a White House report on Soviet Union compliance with existing arms control treaties.<sup>83</sup> In December 1983 the independent General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament (GAC) also submitted a classified report on Soviet violations of existing arms control treaties. Hard-liners in Congress lobbied for the publication of this report, amending the Defense Act of 1984 to require additional publication of an unclassified version.<sup>84</sup>

In response to this pressure, on 23 January 1984 Reagan released a ‘Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report and a Fact Sheet on Soviet Noncompliance with Arms Control Agreements’, describing the seven cases of Soviet noncompliance that he considered to be a ‘serious problem’.<sup>85</sup> Reagan had also introduced the theme of Soviet noncompliance in a speech on US-Soviet relations on 16 January just prior to the release of the report. ‘In recent years we’ve had serious concerns about Soviet compliance with agreements and treaties’, he stated. ‘We must take the Soviet compliance record into account, both in the development of our defense program and in our approach to arms control.’<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> National Security Planning Group Meeting, April 16, 1986, Executive Secretariat NSC files, NSPG 131 4-18-86 (Soviet Violations), Reagan Library.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> These are outlined in a memorandum of April 1983 titled ‘Alleged Soviet Treaty Violations: Congressional Concerns,’ Executive Secretariat NSC, Subject Files Content A-Box 3, Arms Control 03-01-83 01-21-83, Reagan Library. See also a memorandum for Robert McFarlane regarding Congressional interest in interim restraint that listed the Senators who were strongly pro and against the policy and which characterised Senate interest in the issue as ‘high’. Christopher Lehman to McFarlane, 28 May, 1985, WHORM Subject File FO, Box 3, 52550-339945, Reagan Library. The report to Congress would become an annual occurrence as requested by the Defense Authorization Act 1985. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 515.

<sup>84</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 515; also Duffy, ‘Conditions That Affect Arms Control Compliance,’ in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*.

<sup>85</sup> Ronald Reagan, Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report and a Fact Sheet on Soviet Noncompliance with Arms Control Agreements, 23 January, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40061>. Last accessed 7 August, 2013

<sup>86</sup> This accusation was couched within a generally less belligerent speech that has been viewed as a turning point of Reagan’s rhetoric towards the Soviet Union. See Beth Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997). Garthoff has argued that this speech shows concessions to both the anti and pro interim restraint lobbyists in Congress. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 144-146. Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation and Other

By 1985 conservative Senators were threatening to introduce legislation that would stop funding for the destruction of any weapons in order to remain within SALT limits.<sup>87</sup> However, bowing to pressure from this right-wing congressional faction by exceeding the unratified treaty limits would bring its own political difficulties. There were vocal proponents of the interim restraint policy in Congress and the administration was aware of the difficulties that abandoning the policy would entail, particularly regarding public opinion in Europe. In an NSC meeting on the topic in June 1985, McFarlane acknowledged the importance of the ‘intangible political framework vis-a-vis our Allies, the Geneva negotiations and with regard to sustaining defense programs in Congress’.<sup>88</sup> As mentioned earlier, Western European public opinion was a serious concern for the administration. The White House was highly conscious of the delicacy of scrapping the policy of interim restraint, and the public damage that could result from any change in its policy. Shultz reported back from a meeting with European foreign ministers in June 1985 that all were ‘worried about the impact dropping SALT constraints would have on the Geneva negotiations and, more important [sic] on public attitudes.’ One foreign minister whose name is redacted in the paper added that giving up on SALT II ‘would have a devastating effect’.<sup>89</sup> This was also an issue the Reagan administration felt that the Soviet Union were keen to use for their advantage in public diplomacy efforts. A memorandum on Soviet media commentary and interim restraint declared it to be a ‘constant topic in Soviet internal and external propaganda’.<sup>90</sup>

Conscious of this dissent, Reagan decided to delay any decision on interim restraint and announced that one aging Poseidon submarine would be dismantled that year, keeping the United States within the treaty provisions in the short-term. However, he neglected to affirm whether or not the US would continue to abide by the provisions in coming years

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Countries on United States-Soviet Relations, 16 January, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39806>. Last accessed 12 August, 2013.

<sup>87</sup> This was threatened by Senators Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina) and Steve Symms (R-Idaho) see Buchanan to the Chief of Staff, 20 May, 1985, WHORM Subject File FO 00603 Box 3, 592000-end, Reagan Library. Buchanan concluded the memorandum by stating that the decision on interim restraint the administration ‘had intended to put off until the fall, or perhaps until year’s end, may well be forced in the next two weeks, or even the next few days.’

<sup>88</sup> National Security Council Meeting Minutes, 3 June, 1985, Executive Secretariat NSC, Box 12, NSC 00118 3 June 85 [Interim Restraint Policy] (1/2), 91303, Reagan Library.

<sup>89</sup> Memorandum for the President: Meetings with Foreign Ministers, Day Two, June 85, Executive Secretariat NSC, Box 91303, NSC 00118 3 June 85 [Interim Restraint Policy] (1/2), 91303, Reagan Library.

<sup>90</sup> Soviet Media Commentary on Interim Restraint, undated (May 1985), Jack F. Matlock Jr. Files, Box 67, Arms Control Interim Restraint, Reagan Library.

and after the treaty would have been due to expire in December of 1985.<sup>91</sup> As was typical in the Reagan White House, opinion was divided on the issue with Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and other hardliners advocating breaking out of the treaty while Shultz advised continuing the current policy.<sup>92</sup> As a final decision would have to be taken at some point, this was in essence a procrastination tactic. Indeed, the *New York Times* described it at the time as ‘the posture of half a leg over the fence’.<sup>93</sup>

The administration recognised the issue of Soviet noncompliance (and therefore untrustworthiness) as a useful counterpoint for both the domestic and international debate on the subject. Basing the justification for potentially ending the policy of interim restraint on the alleged noncompliance of the Soviet Union would portray any failure to adhere to SALT limits in a more positive light internationally, while providing an argument for increased defence spending on the Hill.<sup>94</sup> In an NSC meeting in June 1985, Shultz acknowledged the potential value of public perceptions of Soviet noncompliance within the congressional debate in defence spending. He stated that the administration needed to ‘figure out how to get mileage out of these types of Soviet violations [the Krasnoyarsk radar] in terms of realizing out strategic force modernization program.’<sup>95</sup> McFarlane’s memorandum to the President echoed this sentiment, stating that most agencies had proposed using the opportunity of any Soviet violations to seek ‘additional support, including possible extra funds, for US military programs from the Congress.’<sup>96</sup>

During late 1985 and early 1986, the administration thus increased its focus on the issue of Soviet noncompliance with existing international treaties and linked this to the

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<sup>91</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 569.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Keeping the Arms Lid on, Barely,’ *New York Times*, 11 June, 1985.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Abandoning Nuclear Restraint,’ *New York Times*, 6 June, 1985.

<sup>94</sup> A recent release that reinforces the political nature of the focus on Soviet noncompliance are the set of newly declassified documents regarding compliance with the Limited Test Ban Treaty (one of the treaties the Soviet Union was accused of violating,) that show a tacit agreement on the acceptance of certain levels of noncompliance due to the difficulties related to venting from underground testing. *The Limited Test Ban Treaty - 50 Years Later: New Documents Throw Light on Accord Banning Atmospheric Nuclear Testing*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 433.

[http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb433/#\\_edn1](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb433/#_edn1) Last accessed 10 February, 2014.

<sup>95</sup> National Security Council Meeting Minutes, 3 June, 1985 Executive Secretariat NSC, Box 12, NSC 00118 3 June 85 [Interim Restraint Policy] (1/2), Reagan Library. The Krasnoyarsk radar was a large phased-array radar (LPAR) near the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk that was in violation of the ABM treaty which stated that radars of that nature should be located along the perimeter of the country and outward facing to detect incoming missiles. The radar at Krasnoyarsk was 480 miles inland and thus could potentially be used as part of a defensive system. See Duffy, ‘Conditions That Affect Arms Control Compliance,’ in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 273-269 for a full discussion.

<sup>96</sup> Robert McFarlane to the President, 3 June, 1985, Executive Secretariat NSC Box 12, 91303, NSC 00118 3 June 85 (2/2) Interim Restraint Policy, Reagan Library.

idea of the need for trust in the superpower relationship.<sup>97</sup> References to Soviet violations of existing agreements and accusations of Soviet cheating increased greatly throughout this period. According to Keith Shimko, Weinberger cited Soviet treaty violations four times in speeches in the period 1981-1983 and 48 times in the following three years. Weinberger's public declarations during this time emphasised the 'long history of Soviet violations' and claimed that 'if they want to violate something, they will violate it', therefore, 'you can't trust [the Soviets] unless you have absolute verification.'<sup>98</sup>

Similarly, Shultz made no public mention of any Soviet treaty violations in the period before 1984, but 40 in the subsequent three years.<sup>99</sup> References to Soviet treaty violations also peaked in the president's speeches at this time, from two mentions in 1984, to seven in 1985 and twenty in 1986.<sup>100</sup> Public relations guidance for agency officials during this time included the importance of highlighting the 'need to establish greater mutual trust through strict compliance with international obligations freely taken in our many bilateral and multilateral agreements.'<sup>101</sup>

This claim for the importance of trust within the nuclear relationship complemented Reagan's political language of character, values and faith, while also maintaining a positive message that was suited to Reagan's political strengths. Distrust existed but it could be overcome and a higher goal of world peace was attainable. Reagan highlighted the importance of a lack of trust in the US towards the Soviet Union and linked this to the issue of compliance with treaties, but the message was not overwhelmingly negative or explicitly condemnatory. That was left to other administration officials who were tasked with publicly playing the role of bad cop in order to mediate between the demands of differing domestic constituencies as the relationship with the Soviet Union evolved.

The strategy of contrasting Reagan's relatively positive rhetoric with harsher language from other administration figures can be seen in the original January 1984 speech on the issue of Soviet non-compliance prior to the release of the first administration report.

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<sup>97</sup> As Garthoff has noted, it was always discussed as the issue of 'Soviet noncompliance' rather than the issue of 'Soviet compliance'. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 146.

<sup>98</sup> Keith L. Shimko, *Images and Arms Control* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 77. Richard Perle, Weinberger's Undersecretary of Defense, showed a similar leap in mentions going from seven to 69 mentions in the same time period.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 98

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Memorandum for Senior Agency Communications Officials, 26 November, 1985, Whorm Subject File FO 00609 Box 3, 353080-353150, Reagan Library.

His language in this speech, while conceding the problems of Soviet violations, remained hopeful and contrasted with the subsequent release of the more hard-line report, what Garthoff describes as 'the 'juxtaposition of the "soft" speech and the "hard" noncompliance report' that provided Reagan with a political advantage when dealing with conflicting political pressures on the issue.<sup>102</sup> In fact, Reagan's Director of Speechwriting Ben Elliott proposed this strategy in a memorandum to Director of Communications Patrick Buchanan that outlined a plan for the UNGA speech quoted above. Elliott suggested acknowledging that the 'relationship between U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. is very bad, hampered by mistrust and lack of understanding on both sides', but that 'for our part, Americans can only feel their suspicions are well-founded.' Therefore what was needed was a 'long term program...to lay a foundation of trust between us' that would include increasing communication, travel and trade. 'The beauty of this idea' concluded Elliot, 'is that it permits the President to go forward with a positive idea...while at the same time hitting the Soviets where they are most vulnerable, uncomfortable and defensive.'<sup>103</sup>

While Reagan had managed to defer a final decision on interim restraint for a time, he could not avoid it indefinitely and in 1986 the problem presented itself again. The United States expected to exceed SALT II limits in May or June of that year when an eighth Trident submarine would begin sea trials. Reagan was worried about passing his defence budget through Congress and of the possibility of a Senate resolution calling on the president to remain within SALT limits, and there had been some press coverage criticising the Administration's exaggeration and use of Soviet noncompliance for political ends.<sup>104</sup>

In March and April 1986, Reagan held a series of NSPG meetings on the topic where all present acknowledged the importance of the emphasis on Soviet noncompliance. Admiral Crowe described the situation as 'a chess game between the Allies, the Soviets, etc.' adding that he wanted to ensure the president was 'in the best position to get the money he needs on the hill.' Crowe reflected that '[a]s long as the Soviets are in violation we are forced to take whatever steps are needed'. The Director of the CIA William Casey

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<sup>102</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 146.

<sup>103</sup> Elliot to Buchanan, 9 September, 1985, Whorm Subject File FO 00609, Box 1, 330000-338799, Reagan Library.

<sup>104</sup> See James R. Schlesinger, 'Rhetoric and Realities in the Star Wars Debate,' *International Security* 10, no. 1, (1985): 3-12; 'President's Response to "Cheating" Is Out of Proportion,' *Los Angeles Times*, 6 June, 1986; 'That Report of Soviet Treaty Violations: Guesswork?,' *Washington Post*, 16 November, 1986.



added 'we need to get the message out that if there is no compliance then there will be no sustained treaty. We are winning because we are calling the Soviets on their transgressions.' ACDA Director Kenneth Adelman also recognised the success of the focus on Soviet violations noting 'the US can take a measure of pride in that we have called out Soviet violations and these are now widely accepted.'<sup>105</sup>

Although the administration considered its focus on the issue of noncompliance to have been a successful strategy overall, there were still worries in the White House as to the consequences of announcing a complete withdrawal from the SALT limits. In a further NSPG meeting Meese acknowledged the primary focus of the White House's concern, stating that '[o]ur audience must be congress and the Allies'. Shultz agreed that a 'flamboyant announcement to break numerical SALT limits is unwise. It will hand the Soviets a propaganda windfall...such a step will cause us problems with the alliance.'<sup>106</sup> These concerns led to the equivocal language adopted by the president when he finally announced his decision on interim restraint on 27 May. Reagan stated that he had,

determined that in the future the United States must base decisions regarding its strategic force structure on the nature and magnitude of the threat posed by Soviet strategic forces and not on standards contained in the SALT structure, which has been undermined by Soviet noncompliance.<sup>107</sup>

However, he added that because the US would dismantle two Poseidon submarines, 'we will remain in technical compliance with the terms of the expired SALT II treaty for some months' and that he continued 'to hope that the Soviet Union will use this time to take the constructive steps necessary to alter the current situation. Should they do so, we will certainly take this into account.'<sup>108</sup>

The president's statement actually provoked conflicting newspaper reports about what the administration had decided to do. The *Washington Post* ran a story with the headline 'Compliance with SALT Continued' while the *New York Times* led with the story of continued adherence in its first edition but changed to a focus on breaking with the

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<sup>105</sup> National Security Council Meeting Minutes, 3 June, 1985, Executive Secretariat NSC Box 12, NSC 00118 3 June 85 [Interim Restraint Policy (1/2)], Reagan Library.

<sup>106</sup> National Security Planning Group Meeting, 16 April, 1986, Executive Secretariat NSC files, NSPG 131 4-18-86 (Soviet Violations) Reagan Library.

<sup>107</sup> Ronald Reagan, Statement on Soviet and United States Compliance with Arms Control Agreements, 27 May, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=37356>. Last accessed 12 August, 2013.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

treaty in its second.<sup>109</sup> The confusion was such that, even two weeks later the press were still looking for clarification. On 12 June reporters raised the issue with the president again after Press Secretary Larry Speakes had declared the treaty 'dead'. In response to a reporter following up on this quote by asking '[w]hy won't you say it when your spokesman's been saying it very flatly to us. We need it from you. Is it dead or isn't it?' Reagan eventually replied, 'I think you can trust what Larry Speakes said to you.'<sup>110</sup> This would be as close as the president got to a definitive contemporary public pronouncement on a decision that the White House did not want heavily publicised.<sup>111</sup>

By incorporating the administration's decision on interim restraint into the wider language on trust and the nuclear weapons in the international realm, Reagan had been able to frame the debate as a question of Soviet trustworthiness rather than US policy. The following chapter section will demonstrate how, as the debate on interim restraint receded, the administration changed the focus of their speech on the relationship between trust and nuclear weapons in the international realm to focus on the issue of human rights.

### **Trust, arms control and human rights**

As the administration was quite happy to let the issue of treaty adherence and compliance fade into the background at this point, the way in which it talked about trusting the Soviet Union became less tied to issues of cheating and noncompliance. Reagan instead began to give more prominence to the link between trustworthiness of the Soviet Union and its performance on human rights issues.

Reagan once again linked the problem of trust and the problem of nuclear weapons, linking the problem of nuclear trust to questions of human rights. Once again the Soviet Union would need to prove that it was trustworthy in order to ameliorate the issue of

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<sup>109</sup> Cannon, *President Reagan*, 681.

<sup>110</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a White House Meeting With Representatives of People to People International, 12 June, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=37441>. Last accessed 13 August, 2013. Larry Speakes further clarified the following day, saying 'The SALT treaty no longer exists'. 'Confusion on Arms Treaty: Are the 1979 Limits Dead? Yes, White House Says,' *New York Times*, 13 June, 1986.

<sup>111</sup> The unratified SALT II Treaty had expired on 31 December 1985 and the administration finally exceeded its limits at the end of 1986 when an additional bomber was equipped with cruise missiles. The decision was criticised in Congress, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed a resolution urging the administration to stay within the treaty limits. See Farley, 'Strategic Arms Control 1967-87,' in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 243.

mistrust in the international realm that was responsible for the problem of nuclear weapons. Reagan talked of the concept of human rights in relation to freedom and to his meaning for trust as ‘trust the people’ by frequently repeating variants of the phrase ‘a country that distrusts its own people cannot be trusted’. Through this characterisation Reagan portrayed the Soviet Union as inherently untrustworthy because it did not trust its own people. If one accepted this description, the onus would always be on the Soviet Union to prove its trustworthiness through action, or continue to be responsible for the problem of trust that resulted in nuclear weapons. This created a link between any action that the US might take (or fail to take) on nuclear arms or arms control and the human rights practices of the Soviet Union. Reagan was able to connect the issue of the Soviet Union’s performance on human rights to their trustworthiness as a partner in nuclear arms control negotiations and spoke as though there was an intrinsic relationship between these two things. This link between arms control and human rights thus became a valuable way of answering any accusations of US intransigence in arms control negotiations.

The strategy of using human rights as a tool of public diplomacy was not a new one and contests to claim the moral high ground on the issue of human rights, among other issues, had been a feature of the Cold War for many years.<sup>112</sup> In fact, the issue is more usually associated with President Carter than with President Reagan.<sup>113</sup> Carter attempted to move the foreign policy debate away somewhat from the dominant Cold War framework by placing the idea of human rights at the centre of his foreign policy. This attempt was not successful and all but abandoned by 1979. Still, in the 1980 presidential election, the Reagan campaign was able to successfully target Carter’s approach to human rights as inconsistent and naive.<sup>114</sup> The Reagan White House, in contrast, did not prioritise the issue of human rights outside the parameters of the superpower relationship. As Garthoff suggests, Reagan ‘drastically reduced attention to human rights matters for the non-

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<sup>112</sup> See Umberto Tulli, ‘Whose rights are human rights? The ambiguous emergence of human rights and the demise of Kissingerism,’ *Cold War History* 12, no. 4 (2012): 573-593; Michael C. Morgan, ‘The Seventies and the Rebirth of Human Rights,’ in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela and Daniel J. Sargent, eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>113</sup> Though studies such as that conducted by Carleton and Stohl have questioned if this was actually matched by action. David Carleton and Michael Stohl, ‘The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan,’ *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1985): 205-229. See also Steven C. Poe, ‘Human Rights and Economic Aid Allocation under Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter,’ *American Journal of Political Science* 36, no. 1 (1992): 147-167.

<sup>114</sup> For an overview of opinion on the success of Carter’s approach to human rights see David Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, ‘Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy,’ *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 1 (2004): 1113-1143.

communist (or, more precisely, the non-Soviet bloc) world' and his administration's 'general hard line against the Soviet system, rather than particular abuses, was equated with defense of human rights.'<sup>115</sup> In fact, early in his first term Reagan was criticised by several governments in international forums and by NGOs for a lack of seriousness on the subject.<sup>116</sup>

The new administration's approach to human rights was influenced by Reagan foreign policy advisor (and later Ambassador to the United Nations) Jeane Kirkpatrick's argument, published in an article for *Commentary* magazine in 1979, in which she criticised the 'failure of the Carter administration's foreign policy' and made a distinction between friendly and non-friendly states, advocating support for authoritarian regimes if it was necessary to combat the larger evil of totalitarianism.<sup>117</sup> David Carleton and Michael Stohl have argued that, by identifying totalitarian regimes as those that supported the Soviet Union, the Reagan administration essentially equated human rights with US security interests, so its human rights rhetoric was 'primarily concerned with the abuses of the Soviet Union and its allies and with preventing any further Soviet expansion.'<sup>118</sup> The Reagan administration thus chose to deal with human rights as a Cold War issue and consistently connected any mention of human rights to its relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>119</sup> 'By taking a strong stand against the Soviet Union', claimed Reagan's Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams, 'we are dealing with the human-rights problem wholesale rather than retail. The Soviet Union is the center of a Communist system that is the worst enemy of human rights.'<sup>120</sup>

The issue of human rights was officially articulated as an element of Reagan's four-part strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union in 1983.<sup>121</sup> The administration's earliest

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<sup>115</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 26.

<sup>116</sup> Department of State Memorandum, U.S. Policies Under Attack at International Meetings, 23 October, 1981, John Lenczowski Files Box 3, Project Truth (3-6), Reagan Library.

<sup>117</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, 'Dictators and Double Standards,' *Commentary*, November 1979.

<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/dictatorships-double-standards/> Last accessed 17 April, 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Carleton and Stohl, 'The Foreign Policy of Human Rights,' 211.

<sup>119</sup> Reagan also placed a new focus on international terrorism as a key part of human rights. In Alexander Haig's first press conference as Secretary of State he declared that, '[i]nternational terrorism will take the place of human rights in our concern, because it is the ultimate abuse of human rights.' He then linked this to the threat of the Soviet Union as sponsor of international terrorism. Carleton and Stohl, 'The Foreign Policy of Human Rights,' 220.

<sup>120</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 26.

<sup>121</sup> This was an agenda encompassing human rights, regional issues, arms control, and bilateral issues, see Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 266.

expression of policy towards the Soviet Union, National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 75, included human rights within the 'Political Action' section that stated:

U.S. policy must have an ideological thrust which clearly affirms the superiority of U.S. and Western values of individual dignity and freedom, a free press, free trade unions, free enterprise, and political democracy over the repressive features of Soviet Communism. We need to review and significantly strengthen U.S. instruments of political action including...efforts to highlight Soviet human rights violations.<sup>122</sup>

Within the superpower relationship, the White House recognised the notion of human rights as a tool to place international pressure on the Soviet Union and to encourage action within Eastern Europe from an early date. As the interaction between the two states intensified during Reagan's second term, so the issue of human rights grew in prominence too.<sup>123</sup>

President Reagan had therefore been using the idea of human rights as a rhetorical tool in the superpower rivalry from the beginning of his first term. However, during his second term, as arms control became a more prominent part of his foreign policy, Reagan also began to tie his language about human rights concerns to trust and to connect this to the ongoing nuclear arms control negotiations. He publicly maintained the argument that nuclear weapons were a result of the distrust between nations rather than its cause, but he transferred the reason for this distrust away from Soviet noncompliance with existing international treaties that had been prominent throughout the interim restraint debate, to the actions the Soviet Union took to curtail the human rights of its citizens and impose its will on others. According to Reagan, the distrust that existed between the two superpowers in the area of arms control could not be alleviated until the Soviet Union changed its practices on human rights and halted its imperial ambitions. This was first seen in the aforementioned January 1984 speech, which was considered a turning point in Reagan's rhetoric towards the Soviet Union. In the speech he identified human rights as '[a]nother

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<sup>122</sup> The issue was also mentioned in a section on the geopolitical shaping of the political environment and focused on Eastern Europe stating the 'primary U.S. objective is to loosen Moscow's hold on the region while promoting the cause of human rights in individual East European countries.' National Security Decision Directive (NSC-NSDD-75), *U.S. Relations with the USSR*, 17 January, 1983. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/NSDDs.html#Uz5-E6hdWbs> Last accessed 4 April, 2014.

<sup>123</sup> Reagan's references to Soviet human rights breaches rose from six mentions in 1981 to twenty six in 1982 and grew steadily every year reaching 60 mentions by the president in 1986, and 69 in 1987. Of course this reflects an increasing number of statements about the Soviet Union as relations and contacts developed but it illustrates that the issue rose to prominence in tandem with their relationship. Content analysis conducted on the 'Public Papers of the Presidents' at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php>

major problem in our relationship with the Soviet Union', adding that 'Soviet practices in this area, as much as any other issue, have created the mistrust and ill will that hangs over our relationship.'<sup>124</sup>

After Mikhail Gorbachev's accession to power in March 1985, the Reagan administration became more anxious about winning the public relations war, especially in Europe and increasingly focused on the issue of Soviet human rights violations to help manage this. Gorbachev was proving to be much more adept than his predecessors at positively influencing international public opinion and, as Ambassador Max Kampelman admitted, '[g]one...were the days when the Reagan administration could rely on the Soviets to serve as their own worst enemies in public relations.'<sup>125</sup> As arms control talks resumed in Geneva in March 1985, the Reagan administration viewed early Soviet proposals purely as propaganda efforts. In October 1985, while visiting France, Gorbachev presented a new proposal that offered a fifty percent reduction in strategic arms. The Reagan administration received this with scepticism, characterising the proposal in one analysis as 'clearly a propaganda attempt to put the ball in the US court.'<sup>126</sup> A memorandum from Shultz to the president on the subject described it as 'one sided and self-serving' and 'obviously designed for public appeal'.<sup>127</sup>

In January 1986, Gorbachev publicly made a radical arms control proposal to abolish all nuclear weapons by the year 2000.<sup>128</sup> At an NSPG meeting in February 1986, officials debated how to respond to Gorbachev's statement. Once again, they considered it to be a public relations ploy. Reagan's NSA John Poindexter described it as 'subtle and clever' and Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State on Arms Control Paul Nitze explained the move as driven by a 'psychological need to recapture the "high ground"', a view which was reiterated by Chief of Staff Howard Baker who also acknowledged that 'the chess game for world opinion was a central element of the present

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<sup>124</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation and Other Countries on United States-Soviet Relations, 16 January, 1984, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39806>. Last accessed 13 August, 2013.

<sup>125</sup> Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee*, 288.

<sup>126</sup> Bureau of Intelligence and Research-Analysis, 2 October, 1985, Jack F. Matlock Jr. Files Box 20, USSR Arms Control 1, Reagan Library.

<sup>127</sup> George Shultz to the President, 3 October, 1985, Executive Secretariat NSC-System Files, 8590507-8591016, File 8591041, Reagan Library.

<sup>128</sup> At the same time the Soviet Union also extended its moratorium on nuclear testing. See Farley, 'Strategic Arms Control 1967-87,' in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 242.

policy debate'.<sup>129</sup> Shultz and Nitze did not consider Gorbachev's arms control proposals as serious, but rather as a 'blockbuster' case of propaganda.<sup>130</sup> In private correspondence with Reagan in September 1985, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher characterised Gorbachev as a 'deft operator...playing western public opinion skilfully and for all its worth', adding '[h]is purpose is of course to set opinion in Europe against the United States, to give the impression that the Soviet Union is full of initiatives and original ideas while the United States is flat footed and unimaginative.'<sup>131</sup>

To contend with Gorbachev's diplomatic initiatives, Reagan adopted the tactic of placing the Soviet arms control proposals within a wider political context. The official public diplomacy strategy on dealing with Soviet proposals advised keeping proposals 'in perspective of broader US/Soviet agenda and US emphasis on four areas of dialogue'.<sup>132</sup> One way Reagan managed this was by creating a connection between the concepts of arms control, human rights and international trust. To refute the perception that the Soviet Union was willing to pursue radical arms reductions but that the United States was uncompromising, Reagan talked about the Soviet Union as an innately untrustworthy partner in arms control, thus undermining the legitimacy of any proposals they might make. In an October 1985 memorandum to McFarlane, NSC staffer Rodney McDaniel described human rights as 'really a codeword for Soviet geopolitical world goals which are the central threat to peace and stability', adding 'therefore human rights must be much more firmly and continually addressed by U.S. spokesmen.'<sup>133</sup>

The president talked about trust as part of the relationship between arms control and human rights in his speeches during the run up to the Reykjavik summit in 1986. A further NSC memorandum to McFarlane from McDaniel highlighted the opportunity the summit would provide for the administration to promote 'its foreign policy agenda through an aggressive public outreach effort.' The memorandum further claimed that to place pressure on the issue of human rights at that time 'would automatically increase

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<sup>129</sup> National Security Planning Group Meeting Notes, 3 February, 1986, Executive Secretariat NSG NSPG Box 3, NSPG 127 020686 (Arms Control Gorbachev) 2 of 2, Reagan Library.

<sup>130</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 323.

<sup>131</sup> Message from Prime Minister Thatcher to President Reagan, September 1985, Jack F. Matlock Jr. Files Box 33, Geneva Mtg-Allied Correspondence, Reagan Library.

<sup>132</sup> Public Handling of Soviet Arms Control Proposals, 22 February, 1986, Jack F. Matlock Jr. Files Box 67, Arms Control Gorbachev (4 of 5) Reagan Library.

<sup>133</sup> Rodney McDaniel to Robert McFarlane, 4 October, 1985, Executive Secretariat NSC System Files 8591033-8591038, Reagan Library.

U.S./Western leverage over the Soviets at any future negotiating forums on any issues.’<sup>134</sup>  
The administration continued to place a focus on this after the summit. The White house talking points for post-Reykjavik briefings emphasised the message that,

[r]espect for human rights is as important to peace as arms reductions because peace requires trust...A country that breaks faith with its own people cannot be trusted to keep faith with foreign powers.<sup>135</sup>

In a speech to the UNGA in New York in September, Reagan described human rights as ‘the indispensable element for peace, freedom, and prosperity’ and recounted his conversation with Gorbachev in their meeting in Geneva the previous year.

Mr. Gorbachev was blunt, and so was I. We came to realize again the truth of the statement: Nations do not mistrust each other because they are armed; they are armed because they mistrust each other. And I did not hesitate to tell Mr. Gorbachev our view of the source of that mistrust: the Soviet Union’s record of seeking to impose its ideology and rule on others.<sup>136</sup>

The following month, when addressing the nation on the topic of the Reykjavik Summit, Reagan linked the idea of peace to the issue of human rights by quoting President Kennedy: ‘And is not peace, in the last analysis, basically a matter of human rights?’ Reagan added that ‘an improvement of the human condition within the Soviet Union is indispensable for an improvement in bilateral relations with the United States. For a government that will break faith with its own people cannot be trusted to keep faith with foreign powers.’ He then linked this improvement to a more positive interpretation of the Soviet Union’s intentions, ‘[w]hen it comes to human rights and judging Soviet intentions, we’re all from Missouri-you got to show us.’<sup>137</sup> Reagan repeated this point on several

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<sup>134</sup> McDaniel to McFarlane, Post-Iceland Public Outreach, undated (September 1986), Max Green Files Box 3, Arms Control (3), Reagan Library.

<sup>135</sup> White House Issue Brief, 16 October, 1986, Alton Keel Files Box 1, Reykjavik Briefings (2 of 3), Reagan Library.

<sup>136</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address to the 41st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, 22 September, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36458>. Last accessed 13 August, 2013.

<sup>137</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation on the Meetings with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland, 13 October, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36587>. Last accessed 13 August, 2013. Reagan made a similar point in public statements on 4 October and 31 December.



occasions during this period and other members of the administration reinforced it in their statements.<sup>138</sup>

During 1987 Gorbachev made several significant concessions on arms control, delinking the talks on INF from the negotiations on strategic weapons in February and putting forward the INF double zero proposal in July. In May, NSA Frank Carlucci expressed his worry that the US was ‘losing the public diplomacy ground to the Soviets’.<sup>139</sup> Reagan continued to make the connection between trust and human rights in several variants throughout the year, mainly in speeches focused on a European audience. In a statement at the Venice Economic Summit Conference on East-West relations in June 1987 he called for ‘significant and lasting progress in human rights, which is essential to building trust between our societies.’<sup>140</sup> The same month, in his famous Brandenburg Gate speech in West Berlin, he declared,

we must remember a crucial fact: East and West do not mistrust each other because we are armed; we are armed because we mistrust each other. And our differences are not about weapons but about liberty.<sup>141</sup>

In an address broadcast to the people of Western Europe in November, Reagan declared that the United States would,

closely watch the condition of human rights within the Soviet Union. It is difficult to imagine that a government that continues to repress freedom in its own country, breaking faith with its own people, can be trusted to keep agreements with others.<sup>142</sup>

After the Washington Summit in December, Reagan continued to talk about trust as related to human rights, describing that he had explained to Gorbachev in their conversation ‘how difficult it is for the people of the Western democracies to have trust in

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<sup>138</sup> On 3 October Press Secretary Larry Speakes reiterated this point, and on 6 November Shultz repeated the words of Reagan ‘A government that breaks faith with its own people cannot be trusted to keep faith with foreign powers.’ In Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 293.

<sup>139</sup> Frank Carlucci to Howard Baker, 15 May, 1987, Howard H. Baker Files Box 4, Nuclear Weapons, 19 March, 1987, Reagan Library.

<sup>140</sup> Ronald Reagan, Venice Economic Summit Conference Statement on East-West Relations, 9 June, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34376>. Last accessed 13 August, 2013.

<sup>141</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, 12 June, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34390>. Last accessed 13 August, 2013.

<sup>142</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address to the People of Western Europe on Soviet-United States Relations, 4 November, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33635>. Last accessed 13 August, 2013.

a government that doesn't trust its own people and denies their human rights.'<sup>143</sup> Again, this was based on the administration's policy to link these issues and its continued assertions that 'a country that represses its population sows mistrust abroad.'<sup>144</sup> In this manner the White House could, as Shultz stated in an Oval Office meeting, 'hold them hostage on human rights'.<sup>145</sup>

Reagan's connection of the issue of human rights to the concept of the trustworthiness (or untrustworthiness) of the Soviet Union was a useful tool of public diplomacy. Reagan was able to use it to place international political pressure on Gorbachev to extend and deepen any reforms of the Soviet sphere and combat the Soviet leader's successful public diplomacy effort in Western Europe. This did not mean that any concern coming from the Reagan administration on human rights was by definition disingenuous. This research does not claim that President Reagan did not have any sincere concern for cases of human rights violations that came to his attention. In fact, the White House did intervene privately with Soviet representatives in many individual human rights cases, most notably to deal with the plight of seven Pentecostal Christians who had taken refuge in the US Embassy in Moscow in 1978 and had been living there ever since. President Reagan had pushed for their safe passage in his first meeting with Dobrynin in 1983.<sup>146</sup>

However, there is an interesting contrast between the attempts to quietly resolve specific cases such as this and the general public denouncements. Unlike the specific cases such as the Pentecostal Christians, in whom Reagan privately took an interest, his speech on human rights and trust was not generally linked to any specific changes. Both trust and the idea of human rights as expressed in this rhetoric were hazy, feel-good words and both were malleable enough concepts to fit a general and flexible purpose. In this way, Reagan could tie any issues of arms control to wider political matters and keep the public's

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<sup>143</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with News Editors and Broadcasters, 11 December, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33807>. Last Accessed 13 August, 2013.

<sup>144</sup> White House Talking Points, The Moscow Summit, 13 May, 1988, Ronald Lehman Files Box 5, Moscow Summit Planning April 1988-May 1988 (3 of 5), Reagan Library.

<sup>145</sup> Hand written notes by Colin Powell from meeting, 20 January (1988) RR, HHB, GPS, CP, Colin Powell Files Box 3, Shultz, George (Sec State [1 of 3]), Reagan Library.

<sup>146</sup> See accounts of this by Reagan officials such as Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 55-59 and Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*. These accounts also argue for Reagan's sincere personal concern regarding human rights violations in the Soviet Union. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this study is not to question or 'prove' Reagan's sincerity (or insincerity) for it is not the motivations of the individual that are under examination but the context of their speech and the function of their language.

attention on the human rights problems of the Soviet Union, rather than any perceived intractability on the part of the United States on specific arms control issues.

This was an effective counter to arguments from the Soviet Union that might point to specific cases where they had made concessions on human rights.<sup>147</sup> Framing arms control as connected to this general human rights-based distrust also provided a rebuttal to any arms control initiatives proposed by the Soviet Union while still portraying the President as a leader who was working for peace. Once again, as with the debate on interim restraint, this fitted with the US administration public relations policy regarding the Soviet Union that represented the President as generally ‘upbeat and hopeful’ regarding relations with the Soviet Union and offered the possibility of peace and arms control, while ‘other US officials analyze for the press the reality of the Soviet proposals’.<sup>148</sup>

Because Reagan talked of the concept of human rights in relation to freedom, liberty and to trusting the people, by this description the Soviet Union was innately untrustworthy because it did not trust its own people. If one accepted this, the obligation would always be on the Soviet Union to prove that it was trustworthy. The great benefit of this use of trust was that it transcended any specific concessions that the Soviet Union might make, for as Reagan declared ‘trust between East and West will flourish not only when prisoners are released but when the instruments of repression are dismantled and repressive laws and practices are abolished.’<sup>149</sup> Until that time, ‘[h]ow can we help but doubt a government that mistrusts its own people and holds them against their will?’<sup>150</sup>

It was in this manner that Reagan was able to use his meaning for trust to push for institutional changes within the Soviet system rather than focus on single issue concessions. A Department of State Briefing Paper articulated this strategy with regard to US objectives at the Vienna Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) follow up meetings. It advised staff to ‘[k]eep focus on Eastern failures to honor

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<sup>147</sup> For example, at the end of 1986 after the Reykjavik summit Gorbachev released several prisoners of conscience including the famous scientist Andrei Sakharov. Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 151.

<sup>148</sup> Rodney McDaniel to Robert McFarlane, 4 October, 1985, Executive Secretariat NSC-System Files 8590507-8591096, 8591033-8591038, Reagan Library. McDaniel was Executive Secretary to the NSC.

<sup>149</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a White House Briefing for Human Rights Supporters, 3 December, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33765>. Last accessed 15 August, 2013.

<sup>150</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks to the World Affairs Council of Western Massachusetts in Springfield, 21 April, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35716>. Last accessed 15 August, 2013.

commitments on human rights and human contacts; note progress; insist on much more; press for procedural and legal changes to institutionalise progress.’<sup>151</sup> This connection between trust, human rights and arms control served as useful rhetoric to justify a broad range of policy preferences right up until the end of the Reagan presidency. In April 1988 Vice President Bush recorded a memorandum of conversation he had conducted with important Republican donor, Dwayne Andreas. Andreas had recently had a private conversation with Gorbachev during which Gorbachev had expressed an eagerness to meet with Bush after he was confirmed as Republican presidential nominee and had complained that it was difficult to have ‘a meaningful conversation now with anybody in the [Reagan] administration’ adding, ‘[w]e don’t get any real conversation anymore. It all starts out and ends on human rights.’<sup>152</sup>

### **Trust the technology: Reagan and the Strategic Defense Initiative**

Throughout the period in question, Reagan also made use of the language of trust in relation to SDI. He framed the issue of SDI as a choice about trusting the character and ingenuity of the American public, once again basing his appeal on a particular meaning for trust as ‘trust the people’. By speaking of the SDI in this manner, Reagan could sell the programme as an innately American solution to nuclear vulnerability and the problem of trust in the international rather than having to put any trust in the arms control process. SDI, which Reagan described as ‘a tribute to the genius of America’, would actually negate the need to trust the Soviet Union or the arms control process; one could trust the power of America’s technical abilities and its determination instead.<sup>153</sup> Technology would thus release the United States from the obligations of trust in a nuclear age. This rhetorical framing of SDI as a manifestation of the possibilities of US technology and the potential of American initiative was an effective message. Once again he made the link between his policies and the values and qualities of ‘America’, thereby implying that any criticism of the viability of SDI would be a critique of the greatness and potential of the American

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<sup>151</sup> Department of State Briefing Paper, 1 September, 1987, Robert Linhard Files Box 4, ACSG (Arms Control Support Group), (1 of 4), Reagan Library.

<sup>152</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 27 April, 1988, Howard H. Baker Files Box 3, Moscow (US-Soviet Meetings), Reagan Library.

<sup>153</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks on the Strategic Defense Initiative to Martin Marietta Denver Astronautics Employees in Waterton, Colorado, 24 November, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33735>. Last accessed 21 August, 2013.

people, and once again, Reagan's use of trust was bound up in the political imperatives of the nuclear revolution.

The Reagan White House was, in differing ways, both united and divided on the issue of SDI. President Reagan consistently and regularly professed his faith in SDI and expressed his belief that it could be a viable alternative to nuclear deterrence. According to Raymond Moore, 'Reagan's infatuation with the Strategic Defense Initiative began early' and lasted 'long after it became clear that there were many complications, both political and technical, with making SDI operable and deployable.'<sup>154</sup> For Reagan, SDI was the means to return the United States to a time before the threat of nuclear annihilation.<sup>155</sup> This worked well with the nostalgic themes that permeated his foreign policy rhetoric.<sup>156</sup>

This opinion was not largely shared within the administration however, especially as the years went on and expectations for the programme diminished. For McFarlane and Shultz, SDI was the ultimate bargaining tool with the Soviet Union that could force concessions from the Soviets within the nuclear arms control negotiations.<sup>157</sup> For the more hard-line members of foreign policy planning such as Weinberger, SDI was rather a means of disrupting the arms control process, of preventing deals from being made that might not be favourable to the United States.<sup>158</sup> This split in the administration has since been characterised as the 'squeezers' versus the 'dealers'.<sup>159</sup> For Reagan's political advisors, SDI primarily provided a great political message; as Mike Deaver enthused, 'I wouldn't know if it worked or didn't work. The *concept* was a great idea [emphasis in original]'.<sup>160</sup>

It was this lack of cohesion that led to the inconsistency in the pronouncements by both Reagan and other administration officials on the issue. Reagan's original speech in 1983 proposing the idea of SDI was a vision of a system that would completely change the nuclear dynamic, providing a total shield to make the US invulnerable from nuclear attack. This would thus render deterrence obsolete, and in Reagan's words, 'free the world from

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<sup>154</sup> Moore, 'The Reagan Presidency and Foreign Policy,' in Hill et al, eds., *The Reagan Presidency: An Incomplete Revolution*, 192.

<sup>155</sup> Miller et al, *The Star Wars Controversy*, xv; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 264.

<sup>156</sup> See Williams who described Reagan's foreign policy as 'based on nostalgia'. In Williams, 'The limits of American power,' 575.

<sup>157</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 264; Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 256.

<sup>158</sup> Garthoff, *Policy Versus the Law*, 10.

<sup>159</sup> Williams, 'The limits of American power,' 585.

<sup>160</sup> Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee*, 283.

the threat of nuclear war'.<sup>161</sup> This was Reagan's dominant theme in speaking about SDI, however at certain points he also spoke of the programme as if it were focused on simply enhancing deterrence. In response to a question in a press conference in February 1985 for example, he stated that he wanted,

a defense that simply says that if somebody starts pushing the button on those weapons, we've got a good chance of keeping all or at least the bulk of them from getting to the target. Because, even if it's around missile sites, that's the type of weapon anymore in which there's no way to restrain that from killing any number of people.<sup>162</sup>

This implied that SDI would work within the parameters of current nuclear deterrence rather than changing the nature of the nuclear relationship. Yet, the following month he contradicted this again, stating that SDI should 'never be misconstrued as just another method of protecting missile silos'.<sup>163</sup> Reagan's rhetoric on SDI was thus at times contradictory and often at odds with actual administration policy. Any policy discussion of the practicalities of SDI only ever considered the programme to be an addition to deterrence, never a replacement. But while this is evident in the policy documents, Reagan continued until late in his second term to talk about SDI as an absolute shield, in what Miller et al depict as a 'surreal public dialogue'.<sup>164</sup> SDI was therefore a programme whose public image was completely at odds with its actual parameters. As George Shultz said in response to the initial 1983 announcement, 'the idea and the rhetoric don't fit together'.<sup>165</sup>

Although there were differing views on the purpose and limitations of SDI, the White House was nonetheless united in a belief in its importance and made great efforts to ensure that the programme continued as part of the administration's public diplomacy considerations. In May 1985, Reagan issued NSDD 172 on *Presenting the Strategic Defense Initiative* which recognised that assuring 'public, allied and congressional support

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<sup>161</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security, 23 March, 1983, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41093> Last accessed 14 November, 2013.

<sup>162</sup> Ronald Reagan, Interview with Bernard Weinraub and Gerald Boyd of the New York Times, 11 February, 1985, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38212>. Last accessed 14 November, 2013.

<sup>163</sup> In Rebecca S. Bjork, *The Strategic Defense Initiative: Symbolic Containment of the Nuclear Threat* (New York: SUNY, 1992), 80.

<sup>164</sup> Miller et al, *The Star Wars Controversy*, vx.

<sup>165</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 254. See also Matlock who excuses the president's inflated rhetoric on the possibilities of SDI as 'hyperbole'. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 60.

is key to any hope of realising the military and arms control potential of this initiative.’<sup>166</sup> The administration was concerned about the perceived compatibility of SDI research with the provisions of the ABM Treaty and the public reception of the programme. McFarlane had acknowledged this early in 1985 when he declared SDI to be ‘the single most important proposal of the President’s second term; he must win on it’.<sup>167</sup> The White House was also aware that the Soviet Union was targeting the SDI programme in Western European public diplomacy efforts and so worried about the Soviet use of SDI ‘as a major tool in their attempts to split the U.S. from its allies’.<sup>168</sup> In 1986, to combat this, the ACDA released a publication titled ‘The Soviet Propaganda Campaign against SDI’.<sup>169</sup>

Reagan did not initially link SDI directly to his use of trust. Throughout 1985 and early 1986, the White House failed to tie the issue of Soviet noncompliance, and subsequent untrustworthiness, to a justification for SDI or for any new interpretation of the ABM Treaty. By 1985 the administration’s interpretation of the ABM treaty and what level of research and development it would allow on SDI had become a political issue. A review that supported a revised interpretation of the provisions of the treaty, which would have allowed for wider opportunities for SDI research while remaining in compliance, had been commissioned by the Secretary of Defense and had been much debated within the White House.<sup>170</sup>

In October 1985, on the television show ‘Meet the Press’ McFarlane had indicated, (possibly without the president’s knowledge) that the Reagan administration had, in accordance with this review, reinterpreted the provision of the ABM treaty that would impact on potential SDI research.<sup>171</sup> Two days after the interview the White House

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<sup>166</sup> U.S. National Security Decision Directive (NSC-NSDD-172), *Presenting the Strategic Defense Initiative*, 30 May, 1985. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/NSDDs.html#.Uz6BC6hdWbs> Last accessed 4 April, 2014.

<sup>167</sup> Note from Robert McFarlane, 2 January, 1985, Steven Steiner Files Box 1, AC-SDI (01-27-1985), Ronald Reagan Library. It is also an interesting repetition of Bob Haldeman’s assertion that Nixon ‘*must win*’ on ABM seen in Chapter 3 (p. 90).

<sup>168</sup> Soviet Propaganda since July, undated (September 1985) Whorm Subject Files FO 00609, Box 5, 356574 (3 of 7), Reagan Library.

<sup>169</sup> US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *The Soviet Propaganda Campaign against the Strategic Defense Initiative*, ACDA Publication 122 (August 1986) downloaded from [http://jmw.typepad.com/political\\_warfare/useful-downloads.html](http://jmw.typepad.com/political_warfare/useful-downloads.html). Last accessed 10 February, 2014. This short booklet claimed that the Soviet Union had been engaged in a large propaganda programme against the SDI which aimed to ‘stimulate opposition to SDI in the United States and other Allied countries...to ensure for the long term a unilateral Soviet advantage in strategic defense systems and technologies.’

<sup>170</sup> Garthoff, *Policy Versus the Law*, 6.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

confirmed that this was the official view,<sup>172</sup> this was later codified in NSDD 192.<sup>173</sup> This led to public and congressional debate regarding what was permitted under the treaty and SDI research's compatibility with the obligations therein.<sup>174</sup> The push for a less limiting interpretation of the ABM treaty stemmed from the concern that Gorbachev would ask for some guarantee at the Geneva summit with Reagan that the United States would limit work on their SDI programme.<sup>175</sup> This was a concern from more the 'hawkish' elements of the administration, particularly from the Department of Defense, and a letter from Weinberger to Reagan was leaked (possibly by Weinberger himself) that urged Reagan not to agree to any type of limitation on SDI research.<sup>176</sup>

As the reinterpretation of the ABM treaty and the limitations of SDI research continued to be an area of contestation within the administration, the White House was careful in how it publicly justified the programme and was initially reluctant to link it to its speech on Soviet untrustworthiness. This can be seen in a provisional draft of NSDD 172 which acknowledged the existence of 'considerable suspicion that the US is emphasizing Soviet noncompliance with the ABM Treaty and other obligations in order to justify a future move to abrogate the ABM Treaty.' Therefore it advised that concerns about noncompliance 'should not be linked to SDI in such a way as to reinforce this fear'.<sup>177</sup> It was not until after the President made his decision on interim restraint in the lead up to the Reykjavik summit in October 1986 that he began to talk about the issue of SDI in connection to the language of trust.

Wayne Howell has claimed that Reagan used the issue of SDI to push for greater liberalisation and democratisation of the Soviet Union by concentrating on human rights

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<sup>172</sup> However, in another instance of a lack of clarity on the topic the White House, though claiming the new interpretation of the ABM treaty was legitimate, announced that it was a 'moot point' as they would still continue to hold their research on SDI 'in accordance with a restrictive interpretation of the Treaty's obligations.' George Shultz, 'Secretary Shultz's Address before the North Atlantic Assembly in San Francisco on 14 October, 1985,' *Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 85, October 1985.

<sup>173</sup> National Security Decision Directive 192, *The ABM Treaty and the SDI Program (NSC-NSDD-192)* 11 October, 1985. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/NSDDs.html#Uz604qhdWbs> Last accessed 4 April, 2014.

<sup>174</sup> Farley, 'Strategic Arms Control, 1967-87,' 239; Garthoff, *Policy Versus the Law*, 10.

<sup>175</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 753.

<sup>176</sup> 'Washington; Stop That Leak!' *New York Times*, 20 November, 1985; Garthoff, *Policy and the Law*, 10.

<sup>177</sup> Bob Linhard Memorandum re. draft NSDD on presenting SDI, Sven Kraemer Files Box 12, SDI-NSDD April 1985 (1 of 5) Reagan Library. General Robert E. Linhard was Reagan's Special Assistant for Nuclear Issues.



and framing them as a matter of trust during the Reykjavik summit.<sup>178</sup> While the connection between human rights and trust was a prominent theme in Reagan's language, this does not tell the whole story. Howell considered SDI mainly to have functioned as a means to another ultimate end, suggesting that the Reagan administration had a unified view of the use of the programme. However, the issue of trust was actually linked to SDI in a much more complex way and over a longer period of time. Also, as previously illustrated, although SDI was a very useful bargaining chip within the arms control process this was not its only use, as Reagan considered SDI to be a goal in itself.

Howell is correct however, in claiming that by the end of 1986 the administration was making a more overt use of trust to justify the need for SDI. Reagan first used perhaps his most famous saying about trust, his repetition of the Russian proverb 'doveryai, no proveryai' or 'trust but verify' in late 1986 at the time of the Reykjavik Summit in connection to the need for SDI and the importance of US technology within the superpower relationship. He declared that SDI was an

insurance policy to protect us from attack or from accidents or some madman or some other country that develops ballistic missiles, or in case the Soviets don't keep their side of the bargain. No responsible President could rely on Soviet promises for his country's safety. The record on Soviet treaty violations is clear. Now, I'm not a linguist. I'm very limited in foreign languages. But I did say something in our negotiations in Iceland in Russian: Dovorey no provorey. That means trust but verify. We can either bet on American technology to keep us safe or on Soviet promises, and each has its own track record. And I'll bet on American technology any day.<sup>179</sup>

Reagan repeated the same point in a speech one week later, and in a radio address the following month he declared that 'no country should rely solely on a piece of paper for its safety'.<sup>180</sup> By framing the issue in this way he made a choice for the audience about whether to trust the Soviet Union, or be released from the requirements for trust, and therefore exposure to vulnerability, of the nuclear age by the power of American technology and progress.

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<sup>178</sup> B. Wayne Howell, 'Reagan and Reykjavik: Arms Control, SDI and the Argument from Human Rights,' *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 11, no.3 (2008): 392.

<sup>179</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Senate Campaign Rally for Christopher S. Bond in Springfield, Missouri, 23 October, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36640> Last accessed 20 August, 2013.

<sup>180</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Senate Campaign Rally for James Santini in Reno, Nevada, 30 October, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36674>. Last accessed 20 August, 2013

The concept of SDI also fit with Reagan's general political message of apocalypse and salvation. SDI was indeed a perfect linguistic match for a President whose rhetoric was, to a certain extent, incompatible with the acceptance of vulnerability and a certain moral equivalence associated with the nuclear revolution and the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction. Reagan's political message was that of optimism, it was a refutation of the policies of his predecessors who attempted to manage a relative global American decline.<sup>181</sup> SDI could save the United States from this inescapable vulnerability from above that was so incompatible with Reagan's rhetoric of the American jeremiad. G. Simon Harak characterises the rhetoric around SDI as that of soteriology, 'a redemptive return to a time free from the threat of nuclear annihilation'.<sup>182</sup> By trusting in the power of the American people, the United States could return to a time prior to the nuclear revolution when it did not have to accommodate any notions of vulnerability or limitation.

### **The contradictions of trust in Reagan's nuclear era**

The requirements of international politics in a nuclear age led to a central paradox in the Reagan use of trust with regard to nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union. This can be illustrated through an examination of the Senate hearings before the Committee on Armed Forces on the question of SDI. While Reagan's rhetoric on SDI implied that trust in the power of American ingenuity and technology could be taken for granted, much of the congressional debate on the issue of SDI was centred on whether or not the technology could be trusted. This dilemma of trust existed because the characteristics of this type of weapons system meant that it could not be fully tested under real-type conditions. The Senate hearings therefore largely revolved on the question of whether or not the SDI system would be 'trustworthy'. For example, the hearings included the testimony of David Parnas, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Victoria. He had been appointed to the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO) panel but resigned because he claimed that 'no system of the sort being considered by the SDIO can ever be

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<sup>181</sup> Williams, 'The limits of American power,' 579.

<sup>182</sup> G. Simon Harak, 'One Nation, under God: The Soteriology of SDI,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56, no. 3 (1988): 508. For a historical account of the influence of religion on US foreign policy see Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2012).

trusted.’<sup>183</sup> He claimed in his testimony that ‘it is very important that we trust that software. If we do not trust the software, if we do not trust the system, we will make decisions as if it were not there.’<sup>184</sup> There was therefore more than one way in which the word ‘trust’ was related to the public debates on the issue of SDI.

There are two things that should be noted from examining the use of the word ‘trust’ within Congressional hearings on the topic of the Soviet Union and arms control that have a bearing on Reagan’s public use of the word ‘trust’. Firstly, the word ‘trust’ as used by the committee members and the officials and scientists who testified had a different meaning to the way in which the word was being used in Reagan’s speeches on the topic of SDI. The idea of trusting the technology behind the programme had a very specific meaning based on issues of technical reliability and the potential for catastrophic failure. It had nothing to do with morality or belief but was discussed in terms of testability, programming and systemic faults. The word ‘trust’ was therefore prominently applied to SDI in more than one way but its meaning was highly context specific. In the same manner, when Reagan spoke of trust in relation to the technology of SDI, it was still with the same ‘trust the people’ meaning regarding American greatness and values. Neither of these meanings could be described as ‘wrong’. In both contexts the word makes complete sense to the participants in the discourse and the meaning is clear. One cannot argue either that one use of the word is more correct or appropriate in this context. This illustrates that, even within the confines of the public debate on SDI technology, trust had distinct and separate meanings in various situations.

The second, and perhaps more important, point to be made is that, despite the prominence in Reagan’s rhetoric of the need for trust within the superpower relationship, the notion of trusting the USSR to any extent was completely dismissed in Congressional hearings on US-Soviet nuclear relations. In fact, it is perhaps more accurate to say that it was not even considered. Instead, the hearings accepted that no trust existed between the two states and took for granted that the Soviet Union was inherently untrustworthy. It was

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<sup>183</sup> *Strategic Defense Initiative*, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Strategic and Theater Nuclear Forces of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Ninety-Ninth Congress First Session, 30 October, 1985 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1986), 340. The Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO) was the organisation set up by the Department of Defense to oversee the SDI programme.

<sup>184</sup> *Strategic Defense Initiative*, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Strategic and Theater Nuclear Forces of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Ninety-Ninth Congress First Session, 30 October, 1985 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1986), 286.

under these assumptions that a discussion of policy was then conducted. In a House hearing on arms control for example, Congressman Stephen Solarz (D-NY 13) summed up the mood by saying ‘[m]y position has always been that precisely because we can’t trust the Soviet Union, whatever agreements we enter into must be verifiable.’ He later added, ‘I wouldn’t trust the Russians as far as I can throw them.’<sup>185</sup> In a later hearing on Soviet compliance with arms control agreements, Chairman Dante Fascell (D-FL 19) reasoned, ‘I mean since neither side trusts the other side about anything...the ultimate as far as any agreement is concerned involving the nation’s security would be the satisfaction that we have one way of the other with regard to verification.’<sup>186</sup> Philip J. Farley, Nixon’s Deputy Director of the ACDA who was then at Stanford University, testified in the same hearing, ‘[w]e do not rely on trust in international agreements...we rely not on trust, but on *verification* [emphasis in original].’<sup>187</sup>

These quotes are indicative of the general tone of the proceedings and illustrate the assumption that no action in the nuclear realm should be based on trust in the Soviet Union. ‘Our policy is not based on trust or a Soviet change of heart’, declared Shultz to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, ‘it is based on the expectation that, faced with demonstration of the West’s renewed determination to strengthen its defences, enhance its political and economic cohesion, and oppose adventurism, the Soviet Union will see restraint as its most attractive, or only, option.’<sup>188</sup> Secretary Weinberger also expressed the assumption in many public speeches that the Soviets were untrustworthy, ‘not only to deny Soviet trustworthiness’ according to Daniel Frei, ‘but also, to dismiss altogether the idea of showing trust when dealing with the Soviet leaders.’<sup>189</sup>

This demonstrates an interesting paradox in the way in which the Reagan administration talked about trust. On one hand, the Soviet Union was fundamentally untrustworthy. While Reagan’s rhetoric softened during his time in office, until the end of

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<sup>185</sup> *The Role of Arms Control in U.S. Defense Policy*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety Eighth Congress Second Session (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1984), 61. In the same hearing Chairman Fascell said ‘I don’t think any of us have any illusions about the Soviets or trust them any further than they trust us, which is not very far.’ Ibid., 202.

<sup>186</sup> *Soviet Compliance with Arms Control Agreements*, Hearings before the Sub-Committee on Arms Control, International Security and Science of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, One Hundredth Congress, First Session (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 3.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 115[emphasis underlined in original].

<sup>188</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 277-278.

<sup>189</sup> Daniel Frei, *Perceived Images: U.S. and Soviet Assumptions and Perceptions in Disarmament* (New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1986), 189.

his presidency he continued to make the point that no policy decision would be based on trust of the Soviet Union. In 1987 for example, he claimed that '[n]either the INF treaty we hope to sign during the upcoming summit nor any other agreement that follows will be built on trust. Agreements with the Soviet Union must be based on reciprocity, verification, and realism.'<sup>190</sup> This was supported by the pronouncements of his administration officials and congressional debates that assumed a starting point of an untrusting relationship in their analysis of policy options. However, Reagan was still able to call for the need for trust within the superpower relationship and made use of the lack of trust as a basis to justify the action, or inaction, of the United States. The message could therefore be summed up as 'trust is essential in our nuclear relationship with the Soviet Union; trust is impossible in our nuclear relationship with the Soviet Union'. Accepting this paradox meant that the only way in which the Soviet Union could become trustworthy, and therefore a reliable partner in international affairs, would be to no longer exist because the nature of the Soviet Union was inherently untrustworthy.

This paradox also reveals the complex and multifaceted nature of the narrative of trust constructed by Reagan. There are multiple audiences for this speech that are addressed at different, though often overlapping times. Reagan's talk of trust was mainly targeted at the domestic electorate, Congress and the people and politicians of Western Europe and the place of trust within the rhetoric changed depending on the audience. In the domestic sphere, the concept was used by the White House to navigate between strongly divided political opinions within the electorate and in Congress. It was used to portray the president as a man who was dedicated to nuclear arms control (to mollify arms control advocates), while distancing him from any perceptions that his policy was a replay of détente (to reassure hardliners). The paradox of trust with the Soviet Union was thus a useful rhetorical tool for an administration that had been renowned for its hard-line anti-Soviet rhetoric when it began to cooperate with the Soviet Union on nuclear arms control issues.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks on the Strategic Defense Initiative to Martin Marietta Denver Astronautics Employees in Waterton, Colorado, 24 November, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33735>. Last accessed 22 August, 2013.

<sup>191</sup> For an overview of public perceptions of INF Treaty and the impact of Reagan's support see Lee Sigelman, 'Disarming the Opposition: The President, the Public and the INF Treaty,' *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54 (1990): 37-47.

Reagan also talked about trust in order to justify increased spending on the strategic modernisation programme and on the SDI programme. If the Soviet Union could not be trusted, then the President was justified in pursuing other means in order to protect the United States. The language of trust therefore could help the administration gain approval on the Hill for defence appropriations. This issue of defence budget authorisation became important throughout Reagan's second term as the Iran-Contra scandal tarnished his reputation and he lost the Republican Senate majority in the 1986 mid-term elections.<sup>192</sup> In the early 1980s, high military spending matched the US public mood and gained Congressional authorisation but as Reagan's second term progressed he faced what Farley describes as 'increasingly bipartisan opposition to full approval of defense budget requests.'<sup>193</sup>

The language of trust allowed Reagan to say 'yes, but...' to any arms control proposals in order to maintain a positive image on nuclear arms control issues internationally. The people and leaders of Western Europe were another significant audience for the president's use of trust. Maintaining the strength of the western alliance depended on having dependable partners in Europe, and Reagan allies such as Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl, needed to convince their electorates of the integrity of their ally and be reassured in turn of the reliability of extended deterrence and continued linkage of US and European security.

### *Trust but verify*

Reagan's repeated use of the saying 'trust but verify' in particular allowed him to manage what Duffy termed 'the curious and contradictory position of asserting an incorrigible Soviet tendency to cheat on arms control agreements while at the same time it was involved in a number of different negotiations...to reach new arms accords with the Soviets.'<sup>194</sup> Reagan initially used the phrase in conversation with Gorbachev at the Reykjavik summit and it became a great favourite. Reagan would publicly admit to repeating the phrase to the Soviet leader in private meetings to the point 'where he's sick of

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<sup>192</sup> Williams, 'The limits of American power'.

<sup>193</sup> Farley, 'Strategic Arms Control 1967-87,' in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 249.

<sup>194</sup> Duffy, 'Arms Control Compliance,' in George et al, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 278-279.

it, and I love it'.<sup>195</sup> Between 1986 and 1989 it became a kind of a catch-all saying, adapted to fit with whatever point Reagan needed to make at the time.<sup>196</sup> Earlier, the chapter outlined its use within the justification for SDI at the time of the Reykjavik summit in 1986. In mid-1987, as discussions were coming to an end on the INF Treaty and the president was pushing for agreement on on-site verification, Reagan began to associate it more with the verification of treaties:

It's now up to the Soviet Union to demonstrate whether or not it truly wants to conclude a treaty eliminating this class of U.S. and Soviet missiles. With regard to verification, I have to tell you, I'm not exactly a linguist, but in my most recent meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev, I had mastered a phrase, a proverb, indeed, in Russian: *Dovorey no provorey*; it means trust but verify.<sup>197</sup>

From the end of 1987, Reagan used the phrase most often in the context of the need for trust and human rights and connected it to his rhetoric on the Soviet Union not trusting its own people.<sup>198</sup>

The proverb worked well for the President. It expressed his qualities of optimism and his trusting nature while also displaying that he was not naive enough to actually base relations on trust with such an untrustworthy partner. It was the rhetorical version of having one's cake and eating it. On many occasions Reagan used an alternative version, 'trust everybody but cut the cards'.<sup>199</sup> He made various iterations of the same point at fundraisers for Republican candidates throughout 1988:

I know that there are people that...have become concerned that maybe I've been taken in now and I'm taking us down a dangerous road...I know one little Russian

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<sup>195</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 13 April, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35676>. Last accessed 21 August, 2013.

<sup>196</sup> Reagan also used it in situations outside of the US-Soviet relationship to describe his feeling about economists and his relationship with China. For example, '[a]nd that's why with economists, I always have one motto: Trust, but verify.' Ronald Reagan, Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Members of the City Club of Cleveland, Ohio, 11 January, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35502>. Last accessed 21 August, 2013.

<sup>197</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Annual Meeting of the National Alliance of Business, 14 September, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34793>. Last accessed 22 August, 2013. He also made similar points in speeches in August and December of that year.

<sup>198</sup> For example in March 1988 he stated 'I always take up the matter of human rights, and there has been an improvement in that...So, I think progress can be made, but as I have frequently said to him—I'm not a linguist, but I have learned a Russian proverb that I use on him every once in awhile: *Dovorey no provorey*—trust but verify.' Ronald Reagan, Interview with Arrigo Levi of Canale 5 Television of Italy, 10 March, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=35542&st=&st1=> Last accessed 4 April, 2014.

<sup>199</sup> He used this phrase in domestic addresses on eleven occasions from November 1987, firstly with regard to tax policy but then solely regarding the relationship with the Soviet Union.

phrase and I've used it on Mr. Gorbachev time after time till he's tired of hearing it. It is: Dovorey no provorey. It means: Trust, but verify. He finally let me know in Moscow that he'd heard that often enough. [Laughter] So, I told him I had a good old American saying that I might switch to: Trust everybody, but cut the cards [Laughter].<sup>200</sup>

By changing to the similar American expression and placing it within a slightly different context and for a specific domestic (most often Republican) audience, Reagan altered the function of the phrase. In this context he made use of the 'trust but verify' idea to emphasise his lack of trust. Its use was to show to Republican voters and donors that Reagan was not naive in his dealings with the Soviet Union, that really he wasn't being trusting at all. In this way, 'trust but verify', or 'trust everybody but cut the cards', was making an important point domestically to those who doubted his negotiations with the Soviet Union. Reagan's meaning for trust came about as a way in which to deal with the contradictions of his policy on nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union. 'Trust the people' provided a means of dealing with the disingenuous nature of foreign policy in a nuclear era.

## Conclusion

*I've come here today to suggest that this notion of trusting the power of human freedom and letting the people do the rest was not just a good basis for our economic policy, it proved a solid foundation for our foreign policy as well. That's what we've given to the people, why we have repeated what they instinctively knew, but what the experts had shied away from saying in public.*

- Ronald Reagan, April 1988<sup>201</sup>

This chapter has provided a grammatical investigation of President Reagan's use of trust in relation to nuclear weapons and nuclear arms control with the Soviet Union. While Reagan made little effort on arms control during his first term in office, the chapter has shown how, during his second term, Reagan began to engage with the Soviet Union on arms

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<sup>200</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the National Convention of the American Legion in Louisville, Kentucky, 6 September, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36314>. Last accessed 22 August, 2013.

<sup>201</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks to the World Affairs Council of Western Massachusetts in Springfield, 21 April, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35716>. Last accessed 29 August, 2013.



control issues. Throughout this period Reagan often talked about arms control in relation to a particular meaning for trust. Reagan's grammar of trust was thus based on nostalgia for traditional American values and included such words as 'freedom', 'people', 'faith' and 'democracy' and encompassed a specific, ideological meaning for the word 'trust'. The chapter demonstrated how this meaning for trust was bound by context, as it was shaped by Reagan's position within US political culture, the contemporary political climate of the 1980s and the imperatives placed on politics by the nuclear revolution.

The chapter illustrated how Reagan used trust in order to frame the arms control process in a particular manner that could justify the US policy preferences describing the international realm, and in particular the realm of nuclear politics, as one in which trust was important and trustworthiness was a necessary attribute for cooperation. Reagan initially talked about trust with regards to accusations of Soviet noncompliance with existing international treaties, tying the idea of ongoing and endemic Soviet cheating to the trustworthiness of the state as a partner in any agreements. The Reagan administration argued that the ongoing (though questionable) violations showed just how untrustworthy the Soviet Union was and used this argument to legitimate any decisions they might make about their own policy of interim restraint and adherence to the unratified SALT II agreement.

As the issue of treaty compliance became less important for the Reagan administration, the issue of the trustworthiness (or otherwise) of the Soviet Union was less often tied to issues of cheating and more often linked to the idea of freedom and human rights. This was a part of the wider White House tactic of placing Soviet nuclear arms control proposals within a wider political context in order to deal with international pressure to be positive and flexible on any arms control proposals coming from the Kremlin. As the international profile of Secretary Gorbachev grew and the series of superpower summits focused world attention on the subject, Reagan increasingly began to talk about trust as a means of deligitimising Soviet actions and proposals within global, and most importantly Western European, public opinion and used trust as a way to mediate between the demands of different domestic political constituencies regarding cooperation with the Soviet Union on nuclear arms control.

There are two main points to be taken from the grammatical investigation of trust in this chapter. Firstly, that the way that President Reagan talked about trust was a

reflection of the context within which he came to power, his political background and the changing domestic and international situation as his two terms in office progressed. Secondly, that Reagan's way of talking about his particular meaning for trust in connection with the process of nuclear arms control served several useful political purposes.

What these two points show and what this chapter has established, is that while the Reagan/Gorbachev era has often been popularly framed in terms of trust, this connection of trust and arms control is perhaps not a natural way to think about that time but actually a result of rhetorical decisions by the Reagan administration to link nuclear arms control with trust. That the idea of the necessity of trust for any movement on nuclear arms control has often been taken for granted shows the effectiveness of this attempt. Rather than simply accepting a link between trust and arms control and then attempting to explain it, investigating how and why trust was talked about with regards to nuclear arms control in Reagan's second term has provided alternative and useful descriptions of the era. How this use of trust contrasts with President Nixon's use of trust in Chapter 2, and what can be learned from a comparison of the two, will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Reassessing assumptions and insights about trust

*Here it is difficult as it were to keep our heads up,--to see that we must stick to the subjects of our every-day thinking, and not go astray and imagine that we have to describe extreme subtleties, which in turn we are after all quite unable to describe with the means at our disposal. We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers.*

*-Ludwig Wittgenstein <sup>1</sup>*

*The reality that is linguistically created is not random or accidental. It is the constraint under which the process of creating meaning operates that makes it peculiarly relevant to political behaviour, for concepts become meaningful when they are related to people's affective demands...*

*-Murray Edelman <sup>2</sup>*

### Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis contained a critique of the current literature, specifically in International Relations but also throughout the social sciences, on the subject of trust. It argued that, despite the many disparate approaches of this wide body of research, on the whole the literature suffered from a lack of engagement with one fundamental issue: that of meaning. All of the existing research is underpinned by a representational approach to meaning. By taking as its starting point the premise that the word 'trust' is a term that represents a thing that exists and acts in 'reality', that it has an essence and can thus be defined, understood and explained in abstract, the current literature has accepted a specific way of thinking about meaning without question. This approach actually begins, without

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<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 106.

<sup>2</sup> Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal & Quiescence* (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1971), 66.

reflection, at a point where certain important decisions have already been made, and then continues on its path without realising that these decisions have unalterably set the course of the research in a particular direction.

The point of this work is not to contend that this is an incorrect view (though it does argue that this view leads to some unavoidable semantic and methodological challenges as outlined in Chapter 1), but simply to point out that it is not the only or the ‘natural’ one. It is to press for an acknowledgement that a decision about meaning has been made by every one of these scholars whether they realise it or not and that this decision has had consequences for their research.

This thesis also claims that if one acknowledges that there are alternative ways to talk about the meaning of trust to that which is dominant in the existing literature; these alternatives could provide an original contribution to the study of trust in International Relations. The previous two chapters were therefore an attempt to practice an alternative way of talking about trust in the realm of nuclear arms control during the Nixon and Reagan administrations in which the meaning of trust was taken from its use. The point of these detailed historical chapters was to ‘*look and see*’ whether taking a different view of meaning could add a new perspective to the study of trust. The two chapters thus exist as an ostensive challenge to the premise that is dominant in the current literature that trust has an essence or core that can be understood on a purely theoretical level.

This chapter will further investigate how taking a grammatical, ‘*look and see*’ approach to talking about trust can escape some of the semantic confusion in the current literature. It will accomplish this in two main ways. The first section of the chapter will further examine the two historical narratives and show how the meaning of trust in each instance was different and dependent on the context of the era and the person using the word. It will thus demonstrate how taking an essentialised and a-historical meaning for trust does not allow for nuanced description, and will claim that it is in fact more useful to try to understand how and why President Nixon and President Reagan were talking about trust, rather than imposing an external definition onto the time period under study. By doing so, it will provide a practical argument against the idea of an essence, or core meaning for trust that will reinforce the conceptual argument made in Chapter 1.

The second section of the chapter will address the implications of this argument for the continuing and expanding study of trust in International Relations. It will claim that if

the implicit central premise of the current literature, that trust has an essence that can be grasped and transferred between contexts, is questionable (and methodologically unhelpful) then methods of talking about trust in International Relations that are based on this premise should also be reassessed. Based on the descriptions of the grammatical investigations of trust in the previous chapters, the chapter will suggest several alternative means of talking about trust and International Relations that could be part of a more self-reflexive and critical form of study.

### **The value of a contextual meaning for trust**

This section of the chapter will illustrate how the two narratives of trust in the previous chapters challenge the premise of meaning as representation and thus the assumption of an essence for trust. This will be accomplished through a further examination and comparison of the contexts in which the two presidents used the language of trust and how the meaning of trust was located in its use. To do so, it will first elaborate on the complex and changing contexts within which Presidents Nixon and Reagan gave meaning to trust described in the previous chapters.

Firstly, and as previously mentioned, many of the authors who write about trust in International Relations focus on some aspect of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> This seems like a natural and fertile ground for issues of trust but this context also implies some certain qualities in the meaning for trust that can be talked about under these very specific conditions. In many of these studies, as in this one, the focus is also on the issue of nuclear weapons and nuclear arms control during the Cold War, which brings another very specific dimension to how one talks of trust. As stated in the thesis introduction, with the development of the ICBM and the hydrogen bomb during the 1950s, international politics was forced to face the political consequences of weapons capable of destruction on an unprecedented, global scale. The consequences of this nuclear revolution placed particular imperatives on the conduct of politics in the United States at the time under study and, as the previous two chapters have demonstrated, gave particular meaning and significance to the use of the word 'trust' by the two presidents under study. The context of the Cold War and the unavoidable nuclear vulnerability that was such a big part of it, lends a certain resonance

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<sup>3</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*; Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust*; Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*.

to a word such as trust. When states have the power to destroy each other on command and their populations have given to their leaders the responsibility to make decisions about using that power, often with limited knowledge themselves due to the apparent imperatives for secrecy in issues of national security, the political use of the word ‘trust’ has particular significance.

Secondly, the meaning for a word like trust will change depending on the role or position of the person who utters it in relation to the audience. This is something in which relative power is significant, talk of trust from someone who is in some way more powerful has a certain resonance and could, for example, carry with it hints of obligation, responsibility or even coercion and punishment that are based in the relational context. This is evident in this study where the meaning given to trust in the two narratives was notable because it was the president of the United States, the most powerful person in the world, who was using the word. When the president is addressing a domestic audience in the role of both head of government, head of state and Commander in Chief, with all the attendant symbolic power that this brings as well as the history of deference to the office, any discussion of or request for trust is imbued with a specific significance.<sup>4</sup> Also, when a president says ‘trust me’, especially in the realm of foreign policy or national security, the access to the classified information, intelligence briefings etc. that accompany the office do justify his request in an exceptional manner. Therefore the claim to authoritative knowledge expressed in any talk of trust by a US president will be based on a uniquely plausible foundation of practical differences in knowledge due to status, as well as the institutional and symbolic prerogatives associated with the office.

Finally, in the previous chapters the meaning of trust was also influenced by its setting. Both Nixon and Reagan were using the word in symbolically loaded settings, whether it was the White House, the UNGA, or a superpower summit. Political settings are not part of everyday life and they are contrived to be that way, to be extraordinary in scale, grandeur, seriousness or formality. As Murray Edelman explains, these settings,

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<sup>4</sup> When the deference normally offered to the president in his official capacity is breached this is highly controversial, a recent example of this can be seen when Congressman Joe Wilson (a Republican from South Carolina) heckled President Barack Obama with the words ‘you lie’ during his State of the Union Speech in 2009. See ‘Two words make Joe Wilson an Internet sensation,’ CNN, 10 September, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/09/10/wilson.online.backlash/index.html> Last accessed 3 December, 2013.

make for heightened sensitivity and easier conviction in onlookers, for the framed actions are taken on their own terms. They are not qualified by inconsistent facts in the environment. The creation of an artificial space or semblance thus sets the stage for a concentration of suggestions: of connotations, of emotions, and of authority.<sup>5</sup>

There is additional symbolic weight added to utterances made in these settings that allows them a certain privilege, and conversely what can be said in these settings is also limited by our expectations of what is appropriate for the setting. For, as Kenneth Burke has stated, '[i]t is a principal of drama that the nature of acts and agents should be consistent with the nature of the scene...'<sup>6</sup> The audiences for these acts have inherited particular expectations for what is acceptable in a specific political setting and actors' abilities to create meanings within these settings will therefore be limited by these expectations, as well as by the historical legacy of the acts that have previously occurred in the same settings (for example the legacy of speeches from the Oval Office that Nixon was keen to exploit in Chapter 2). There is also a difference between public and private settings in the invocation of trust. For example, when Reagan and Gorbachev spoke of a need for trust between their two countries in their conversations in Geneva and Reykjavik, this setting of private conversation, though of course in itself hugely removed from a more everyday conversation, nonetheless gave a different resonance to the word than that which accompanied Reagan's public request for trust between nations at the UNGA.<sup>7</sup>

When one is speaking of trust this wider context matters and it is therefore not always analytically helpful to talk of trust in this particular situation as analogous to the meaning of trust in other contexts such as a personal relationship, or even other settings within international politics. However, even within the limitations of the use of trust within the language of US presidential rhetoric, Cold War politics and the nuclear threat, differences in the meaning of trust are apparent throughout the two preceding historical

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<sup>5</sup> Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 96. Space constraints prohibit a more substantial discussion of the relationship between setting and meaning but it is an area that is full of potential for International Relations, see further work referenced here by Edelman as well as the 'new rhetoric' studies of Kenneth Burke. Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1955) and Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (New York: George Braziller, 1945), 3.

<sup>7</sup> For online transcripts of the Geneva and Reykjavik summit meetings see 'The Reagan Files' <http://www.thereaganfiles.com/the-summits.html>. Ronald Reagan, Address to the 40th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, 24 October, 1985, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=37963>. Last accessed 20 February, 2014.

chapters. The following sections will discuss how the context of Nixon and Reagan's presidencies led to their different meanings for trust.

### *Differences and similarities in meaning*

Examining the two instances of trust together highlights the differences as well as the similarities in what was possible to say about trust. From the range of possibilities of meaning for trust, the two examples, to put it in Wittgensteinian terms, have distinct grammars. Nixon used the word 'trust' in relation to words such as 'knowledge', 'responsibility', 'intelligence', 'facts', 'information' and 'judgement', and he talked about trust in the context of the long history of deference to the institution of the presidency. Reagan's grammar of trust included the words 'people', 'faith', 'liberty' and 'democracy', and he talked of trust with relation to what he claimed were traditional American values, exceptionalism, and the myth of the secular jeremiad. All of which reflected his deep conservatism.

Nonetheless, there was also a level of correspondence in their meaning for trust in these instances which could be part of wider set of 'family resemblances' in the meanings given to the word. One way to think about how both leaders talked about trust could be to analyse it as a request. Both presidents needed the acquiescence of various actors to conduct their policies on nuclear weapons and analysing the use of trust can be one way of describing that process.

Nixon's request for trust was blatant, he said 'trust me, I know better than you'. Trust as expressed in this situation was based on differentiation. It was the exceptional nature and role of the president as embodied in Nixon that was the foundation for trust. The request was to trust Nixon because he was *different* from the ordinary American. The Reagan request for trust was a much more sophisticated and subtle rhetorical gambit. Reagan said 'trust me because I'm just like you, and you're great!' Pandering to a public's vanity is rarely a poor rhetorical choice and, as was shown in Chapter 3, this particular attempt was highly successful.<sup>8</sup> While Nixon requested trust from the public, Reagan

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<sup>8</sup> An example of this can be seen in Reagan's radio address to the nation after the Reykjavik Summit with Gorbachev in October 1986 where he directly refuted the Nixonian rhetoric of trust in leadership to explain his decisions at the meeting to the US public. 'Now, I know it's true that some here in the Capital think the



assumed the trust of the public. This was a useful device which meant that Reagan did not have to gain anyone's trust but merely retain it. Reagan's trust was based on the recognition of similarity. He emphasised the common bonds he shared with the public as fellow Americans and based his meaning of trust on this connection. His request was to trust him because he was *the same* as the ordinary American. In fact it would have been contra to Reagan's broader political message to ask for trust in an institution such as the presidency. Reagan represented a challenge to the establishment, outsider status (even after two terms as governor of California and two terms as president) and limited government conservatism. Reagan could not ask the American people to trust in their government outright and in fact was clear in his public speeches that this was the case. For example, he stated of his presidency in 1988 that,

[w]e made a determination that our dream would not be built on a foundation of sand—something called “Trust Me Government”—but we would trust, instead, the American spirit. And, yes, we were unashamed in believing that this dream was driven by a community of shared values of family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom.<sup>9</sup>

The two leaders thus located the grounds for their language of trust in different places, Nixon in the special knowledge of the president and tradition of respect for the office, and Reagan in the founding myths of America. Though both successfully campaigned for re-election (in 1972 and 1984 respectively) using trust as part of their campaigns as might be expected from an incumbent, once again they each expressed a different message through trust. While Nixon promoted a ‘Great Statesman’ image of wise world leader, Reagan put forward the growth of American communal trust, of ‘Morning in America’.<sup>10</sup>

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people can't be trusted with such complex matters as foreign policy. But along with our Founding Fathers, I've always believed that the intuitive wisdom of the people is far more dependable over the long run than the temporary insights or parochial pursuits of the Washington experts.' Ronald Reagan, Radio Address to the Nation on the Meeting with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, 4 October, 1986. The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36544>. Last accessed 10 December, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Republican National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, 15 August, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36273>. Last accessed 28 February, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> The Reagan campaign team created a series of ads with titles such as ‘Prouder, Stronger, Better,’ that created a vision of restored American optimism and strength. In contrast, one of the most memorable television ads of the 1972 campaign was a video of Nixon's passport which contained the line ‘In his four years in office Richard Nixon has visited six continents and 47 countries,’ and thus emphasised his role as a

Both leaders also talked about the international realm in different ways with regard to trust. For Nixon, trust had little part to play in international politics and his rhetoric underplayed trust in favour of rationality, strategy and interest. In contrast to the image of steady leadership he wanted to project at home, Chapter 2 showed how Nixon actually adopted the idea of being seen as unpredictable and irrational in the international realm to play on the potential advantages of being viewed as untrustworthy. In Nixon's language, trust had little part to play in the international and even less significance in the superpower relationship. In contrast, Reagan described the international as an extension of the domestic, transferring his language of trust and the morality of the everyday American to the realm of foreign policy and security. In Reagan's portrayal of the international, being trustworthy was an important attribute to possess. The two leaders therefore expressed the relationship between trust and the international realm in very different terms.

### *The grammatical approach*

But why were these uses of trust different, and how can we understand these differences? The method of Wittgensteinian grammatical investigation proposed in Chapter 1 provides the space to negotiate between the strategic, intent and actor-focused analyses of much rhetorical or speech act based analysis, and the constraints of the continental, discourse-based approach.<sup>11</sup> It allows for staying on the surface of language and locating meaning and significance in historical context, for in 'knowing the grammar of a word' as Pitkin explains, 'we know what kind of things are-can be-said with it, what would count as

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world leader. For a collection of these advertisements see *The Living Room Candidate* <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/> Last accessed 10 December, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> This brings up the question of the ability to control meaning and the issue of intent and the subject. This issue cannot be addressed fully here and remains an ongoing source of difference between the Anglo-American post-Wittgensteinian and post-Austinian linguistic tradition and the continental tradition which is far beyond the scope of this work. For an account of the differences see Michael J. Shapiro's introduction in Michael J. Shapiro, ed., *Language and Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); and Karin M. Fierke, 'Critical Methodology and Constructivism,' in Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen, eds., *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2001). However, it is useful to reinforce again the central and shared point of all these approaches about the lack of one meaning or essence for a word such as trust. For a good general overview of the 'linguistic turn' see Aletta J. Norval, 'The Things We Do with Words – Contemporary Approaches to the Analysis of Ideology,' *British Journal of Political Science* 30, no. 2 (2000): 313-346 and Ronen Palan, 'A world of their making: An evaluation of the constructivist critique in International Relations,' *Review of International Studies* 26, no. 4 (2000): 575-598.

appropriate occasions for saying them'.<sup>12</sup> By looking at what can be said with the word 'trust' in each context, it is possible to see that, while both Nixon and Reagan, to paraphrase J. L. Austin 'did things' with the word 'trust', it was with the grammar of trust of that time and within a series of overlapping language games; the language games of US domestic politics, the language game of the US presidency and the language games of nuclear weapons and Cold War diplomacy.<sup>13</sup> The following passages will examine how, by staying on the 'rough ground' of context and comparing the two uses of trust, the grammatical approach can provide a description of where the meaning of trust was located in these narratives.

Firstly, the two chapters have shown how Nixon and Reagan had different political styles and political histories and operated under differing political contexts. Nixon was elected as president in 1968 as the 'law and order' candidate to narrow the Johnson era credibility gap.<sup>14</sup> He presented himself as a candidate of experience; he was the veteran Vice President and staunch anti-Communist who had faced down Soviet Leader Nikita Khrushchev in the 'kitchen debate' and dodged stones in Caracas.<sup>15</sup> This experience would help him restore order, both domestically and to US foreign policy.<sup>16</sup> Reagan, on the other hand, was a conviction politician as well as the all-American nice guy who had come to prominence playing the best friend and the everyman on screen.<sup>17</sup> While these descriptions are of course two caricatures, the point is that the way in which the two politicians had historically framed themselves as public figures limited the way in which they could use a word such as trust.

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<sup>12</sup> Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, 121.

<sup>13</sup> J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

<sup>14</sup> Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter* (New York: Wiley, 1980), 188-190. Also Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self Made Man* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 15. Also Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York, London: Norton, 2006), 229. See Nate Jones, 'Document Friday: The Stoning of Nixon's Motorcade in Caracas,' at the *National Security Archive* for original documents regarding the public protests in Venezuela <http://nsarchive.wordpress.com/2012/05/11/document-friday-the-stoning-of-nixons-motorcade-in-caracas/> Last accessed 13 January, 2014. Although Garry Wills has ascribed to Nixon's 'genius of deflation' the fact that '[n]o one remembers what he said to Khrushchev, only that he said it in a kitchen.' Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Kimball describes how Nixon carefully projected an image of caution and centrism in the 1968 election, campaigning as 'the "new Nixon" – the experienced leader, the man of peace, the champion of law and order'. Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> For an account of Reagan's early career see Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*; Wills, *Innocents Abroad*.

The two leaders also had different styles of communication. Reagan's mode of speech was more anecdotal and pastoral than Nixon's. Though Nixon was not unfamiliar with publicly using sentimental speech, most famously in his 'Checkers Speech' for example, it did not sit as easily with him as it did with Reagan.<sup>18</sup> This method of communication, how they publicly performed the role of president, also fed into how they were able to maintain a meaning for trust. Nixon's perception of the power of the executive and need for centralised decision-making contrasted with Reagan's idea of president as figurehead who, as Raymond Garthoff describes, 'acted' the presidency.<sup>19</sup> For Reagan, communication was governance, '[m]ore so than any president than Kennedy', as Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce note, 'Reagan's impact depended on and was constituted by his rhetorical practices.'<sup>20</sup> Strobe Talbott has claimed that the best way to get Reagan's attention was to 'suggest to him what he personally should say publicly about a foreign policy problem or a policy' because he thought of the 'announcement of the proposal as an end in itself.'<sup>21</sup> Nixon, on the other hand, while constantly agonising over his public presentation, saw this as separate from the act of governance and as a hindrance to his ability to govern. He would convey his legendary antipathy for the media by repeatedly stating that 'the press is the enemy'.<sup>22</sup>

The White House communication teams developed contrasting strategies to fit these styles of leadership. Chapter 2 illustrated how Nixon's often highhanded approach to governance was reflected in how he communicated to the public. His approach was

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<sup>18</sup> See Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*. The lack of connection was something Nixon constantly bemoaned. A feature of much internal correspondence from his first term is his concern with the lack of emotion and connection in his public addresses especially on foreign policy. He blamed this partly on his speechwriters whom he criticised as 'all too intellectual' and who 'are ashamed to reach folks and move them'. Talking Paper re. General Comments re Speech Writers, 4 December, 1969, H. R. Haldeman Files Box 152, Talking Papers 1969, Nixon Library. He was also constantly lamenting the 'lack of an adequate PR operation' in his administration to push his image; for example when a speech on Vietnam did not receive the public praise he felt due, he complained that, 'if Kennedy had made it there would have been great acclaim' but 'we haven't got the big man putting it out...' Talking paper re. Meeting with Ehrlichman and Kissinger, 19 May, 1969, H. R. Haldeman Files Box 152, Talking Papers 1969, Nixon Library.

<sup>19</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 7. Cannon also describes how aides would use cinematic terminology to direct Reagan. Cannon, *President Reagan*, 34. This is not necessarily a criticism of Reagan, simply a difference in how both men conceived of the role of president. In fact looking at their respective public perceptions today it appears that Reagan's conception of the performance presidency was ultimately a far more successful one.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce, *Reagan and Public Discourse in America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, 76.

<sup>22</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon*, 250; Chester Pach, "'Our Worst Enemy Seems to Be the Press': TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3 (2010): 555-565.

characterised by secrecy and control and he generally only reached out to the public when trying to gain a win on a specific issue, most notably in his formal, set piece foreign policy speeches on Vietnam in 1969 and 1970.<sup>23</sup> His team dealt with the press by a process of counter-attack rather than a process of continuous management and relationship-building.<sup>24</sup> He also limited the media's access overall to him, for example limiting the number of press conferences that he conducted and attempting to bypass the media and appeal directly to the American public through direct television addresses whenever possible.<sup>25</sup>

By the 1980s after the Watergate scandal, Ford's pardoning of Nixon and the disillusionment with Carter's leadership, Reagan's communications advisors felt that their methods would have to be different. David Gergen, Reagan's Director of Communications, later reflected that '[a]ll of us came out of the Watergate years feeling *very* strongly about the importance of trust in government, of developing relationships in this town that stood on more than simply power, because titles can change so quickly [emphasis in original].'<sup>26</sup> They developed a strategy of strictly controlling access to the president so that they could manage his image, while simultaneously practicing what Hertsgaard terms 'manipulation by inundation', overwhelming the media with information so that, as Gergen explained,

[a]s opposed to Kissinger and Haldeman and that crowd, whose view was that you control the media by giving them bits and pieces [of information], the Reagan White house came to the totally opposite conclusion that the media will take what we feed them.<sup>27</sup>

By providing the media with vast amounts of information and multiple news stories, they could create a sense of total access so that the media would take the story that they were

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, 3 November, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2303>. Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia, 30 April, 1970, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2490>. Last accessed 27 February, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> An example of the administration response to unfavourable press coverage is the angry or critical letters the White House would send pretending to be from members of the public to any reporters who had 'asked particularly bad questions' in news conferences. Larry Higby to Charles Colson, 2 June, 1971, H. R. Haldeman Files Box 80 Charles Colson, June 1971, Nixon Library. Higby was Assistant to the Chief of Staff.

<sup>25</sup> Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 193.

<sup>26</sup> In Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee*, 16.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

given rather than try to find other, less positive ones. This helped to maintain the sense of connection between the public and the president.

The form of how the two leaders talked about trust is another aspect to be considered when looking at presidential communications. Nixon's use of the request for trust was mainly in written communications whereas Reagan more often spoke publicly of trust.<sup>28</sup> Reagan was also the first president to fully take advantage of the televisual medium and what Edelman describes as the 'semblance of close contact' that it provides.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps his specific version of trust as 'trust the people', as presented to the publics of the United States and Western Europe, was only possible on such a large scale because of the perception of enforced intimacy that television as a medium provided to him.

### *The domestic landscape*

These differences in personality, style and strategy all occurred in a specific domestic and international political landscape. On the domestic front, the party makeup of Congress during their administrations and the two presidents' relationships with Congress differed. Following his election, Nixon faced Democratic control over both houses of Congress that continued throughout his six years in office as well as significant legislative pushback on many of his initiatives, including spending on military programmes such as the ABM.<sup>30</sup> Nixon's relationship with Congress was strained and he made it quite clear both at the time and later that he did not have much respect for a legislature that was 'cumbersome, undisciplined, isolationist, fiscally irresponsible, overly vulnerable to pressures from organised minorities, and too dominated by the media.'<sup>31</sup> Congress was also often less than impressed with Nixon's frequently high-handed manner towards them and the lack of

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<sup>28</sup> This is symptomatic of a wider preference both presidents had in their means of communication. While Reagan preferred to be briefed in person and was persuaded by conversation, Nixon preferred his information on paper, a fact that aides were careful to remind White House staff of in a memorandum that read, 'he prefers things in writing (anyone who has worked with him can verify that)'. How the President Operates (Best), undated (1969), H. R. Haldeman Files Box 152, Talking Papers 1969, Nixon Library.

<sup>29</sup> Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, 101. There is a lot of literature on Reagan as the 'Great Communicator'. See for example Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*; Erikson, *Reagan Speaks*; Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee*; Ritter and Henry, *Ronald Reagan: The Great Communicator*; Weiler and Pearce, *Reagan and Public Discourse in America*.

<sup>30</sup> As well as military spending this also included his Supreme Court nominees. Ambrose, *Nixon*, 315. See also Melanson, *American Foreign Policy* and Neustadt, *Presidential Power*.

<sup>31</sup> Nixon, *RN*, 770,

information and communication from the White House. In fact, during the Congressional Hearings on the topic, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations Senator J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark) complained about the lack of Congressional briefing on the ongoing SALT negotiations and Nixon's demands for trust in his decisions from the legislative branch. Fulbright asked, '[w]hat in the world is going on? Are they taking the attitude that this has nothing to do with the Senate, that they trust the President to make whatever judgement is to be made?' Speaking of the ACDA, he stated that 'they refuse to brief us on this and it is all a great secret. Then you say trust the President...'<sup>32</sup>

Although Nixon became president at a time when the credibility of the office was in decline, it is undeniable that his actions made this situation much worse and Congress reacted to this by attempting to restrict presidential powers.<sup>33</sup> Post-Vietnam and Watergate Congresses brought in legislation such as the War Powers Resolution of 1973 and the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Acts of 1974 to limit the autonomy of the president in areas such as committing troops abroad and the allocation of appropriated funds.<sup>34</sup> In this political context, the idea of Nixon's authoritarian 'trust the president' rhetoric did not fit. No president in the late 1970s and 1980s could make that claim with the public and with Congress, or at the very least it would be a challenge to make it legitimately because of the decline in status of the office. Therefore, even if this had been compatible with Reagan's political brand, this way of talking about trust was not open to Reagan to the same extent at the beginning of his presidency as it had been for Nixon, in part because of the repercussions of Nixon's authoritarian attitude towards trust and the role of the president.

After two further weak presidents, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, neither of whom were able to use their positions as incumbents to be elected in Ford's case or re-elected in

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<sup>32</sup> *ABM, MIRV SALT, and the Nuclear Arms Race, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, United States Senate Ninety First Congress, Second Session (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1970), 240-241.

<sup>33</sup> As Craig and Logevall have argued, Nixon's 'conduct of the [Vietnam] war deepened the domestic credibility gap opened up by Lyndon Johnson and generated unprecedented mistrust of the government by a large portion of the electorate.' Craig and Logevall, *America's Cold War*, 283.

<sup>34</sup> See Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 196. The War Powers Resolution, Pub. L. No. 93-148, 87 Stat. 555 (7 November, 1973). The War Powers Resolution is often referred to as the War Powers Act, an overview is available at the Law Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/war-powers.php> the text of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act is also available at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d093:H.R.7130>: Last accessed 12 December, 2013. For a review of all post-Watergate legislation see Andrew Rudalevige *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power After Watergate* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Carter's, Reagan restored a sense of stability to the presidency that had not existed since the era of President Eisenhower. Moreover, Reagan's large victory against President Carter in 1980 brought with it the first Republican Senate majority since 1954, as well as an additional 33 seats in the House of Representatives.<sup>35</sup> Reagan forged a generally successful relationship with the Republican majority in Congress at least throughout his first term and a half, pushing through his budget measures and military spending increases in the first term with relative ease. Reagan's timing was opportune, as Henry Kissinger notes, he 'led a nation that had largely recovered from the Vietnam trauma and had grown disgusted with the humiliations of the Iran hostage crisis... [and] inherited a psychologically recovered American people'.<sup>36</sup> Reagan was also part of an upsurge in the conservative movement that began in the 1970s as public disillusionment with Nixon and Kissinger-era détente and Carter's foreign policy grew.<sup>37</sup>

However, with growing deficits, the Iran-Contra scandal and the loss of the Senate in the 1986 midterms, the political atmosphere became more difficult for Reagan towards the end of his second term, reaching a nadir in 1987 with the publication of the Tower Report on the Iran-Contra scandal and the forced resignation of senior aides.<sup>38</sup> The voting patterns of Congress in general also became more partisan throughout the 1970s and 1980s as the two political parties became more polarised.<sup>39</sup>

The two presidents' attempts to make use of trust in the area of nuclear arms also came at different parts of the electoral cycle. For Nixon as a first term president, re-election was driving much of the administration's actions during the Safeguard ABM debate. Reagan's major initiatives on SDI and arms control came in his second term when the pressure for re-election had been relieved. Electoral concerns were still a factor prior to 1986 as the Congressional mid-term elections were a source of concern for an administration that was beginning to face resistance from Congress to its budgetary

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<sup>35</sup> David Mervin, *Ronald Reagan & the American Presidency* (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 86.

<sup>36</sup> In Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston, 'Introduction,' in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*, 14.

<sup>37</sup> This included the establishment of conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation in 1973, the CPD in 1976 and the Hoover Institution at Stanford. See Hill and Williams, 'The Reagan Presidency-Style and Substance,' in Hill et al, eds., *The Reagan Presidency: An Incomplete Revolution*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> President's Special Review Board, *The Tower Commission Report* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1987).

<sup>39</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy*, 22.



policies. However, it was still not an equivalent pressure to facing a presidential election for a second term.

### *The international political setting*

As well as the differences in the domestic political environment, the two presidents were talking about trust within very different international contexts. Nixon was dealing with a world in which the United States could no longer claim strategic superiority over the Soviet Union and in which other world actors such as China, Western Europe and Japan were becoming more important factors in addition to the established bi-polar superpower relationship. The five-to-one lead in strategic missiles enjoyed by President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis had slipped away during the 1960s with a massive Soviet build-up in land-based missiles that, according to William Bundy ‘grew from 250 operational ICBMs in mid-1966 to 1060 in September 1969 (just ahead of the United States’ 1054)’, although the United States still had an overall edge due to their greater number of sea and air launched missiles.<sup>40</sup>

Though Nixon had made political use of criticising Hubert Humphrey, his opponent in the 1968 election, for speaking of nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union, he was aware that strategic superiority was no longer an option. In his first press conference as president he began instead to speak of ‘sufficiency’ which he described as ‘sufficient military power to defend our interests and to maintain the commitments which this administration determines are in the interest of the United States around the world.’<sup>41</sup> This was a rhetorical attempt to move beyond the parity/superiority dichotomy but also a clear admittance of the loss of strategic superiority. According to Richard Melanson, Nixon believed that ‘an environment characterized by the growth of Soviet military power to parity, the remarkable economic recovery of Western Europe and Japan, and the fragmentation of monolithic communism’ had replaced the post-war environment of US dominance.<sup>42</sup> Nixon judged that dealing with this more fragmented,

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<sup>40</sup> Bundy, *A Tangled Web*, 93.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Nixon, The President's News Conference, 27 January, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1942>. Last accessed 12 January, 2014

<sup>42</sup> Melanson, *American Foreign Policy*, 66.

multi-polar world would require strong leadership in order to shape what Kissinger characterised as ‘a new foreign policy for a new era’.<sup>43</sup>

After President Carter’s failed attempt to reshape US foreign policy away from a focus on the Cold War rivalry, as well as the concerns of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Iran hostage crisis, Ronald Reagan came to the presidency determined to restore America to its rightful place of global predominance. Supported by a conservative foreign policy team, Reagan’s foreign policy ethos was premised on what Williams has labelled as a ‘fundamental rejection’ of the previous two administrations’ acceptance of a relative decline in US global power.<sup>44</sup> Reagan determined to overcome this through increased military spending and he used inflated rhetoric about the Soviet threat to convince a public that these increases were not only necessary but essential.<sup>45</sup>

However, Reagan’s portrait of a ‘decade of neglect’ and his unprecedented response to restore American strength from a slow decline is lacking in two respects.<sup>46</sup> Firstly, Carter had already begun a military buildup in the last two years of his presidency in order to combat political attacks from the right and from hawkish, neoconservative lobby groups such as the CPD during his re-election campaign, particularly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.<sup>47</sup> Carter planned to increase defence spending, including authorising the development of the new MX ICBM missile, and brought in Presidential Directive (PD) 59, a nuclear targeting directive that envisioned the possibility of a limited nuclear war and planned for its occurrence.<sup>48</sup> While Reagan did significantly increase military spending, he was also continuing a trend that had begun prior to his accession to office and, while the administration’s public rhetoric was more aggressive,

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<sup>43</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 65.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, ‘The limits of American power,’ 579.

<sup>45</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Reagan spoke of this on several occasions for example: ‘Every item in our defense program—our ships, our tanks, our planes, our funds for training and spare parts—is intended for one all-important purpose: to keep the peace. Unfortunately, a decade of neglecting our military forces had called into question our ability to do that.’ Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security, 23 March, 1983, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsby.edu/ws/?pid=41093>. Last accessed April 14, 2014. In the Fall 1985 issue, the journal *International Security* dedicated an issue to this question that included contributions supporting the argument: Colin S. Gray and Jeffrey G. Barlow, ‘Inexcusable Restraint: The Decline of American Military Power in the 1970s,’ *International Security* 10, no.2 (1985): 27-69, as well as a defence of the Carter policy: Robert W. Komer, ‘What “Decade of Neglect”?’ *International Security* 10, no.2 (1985):70-83.

<sup>47</sup> Craig and Logevall, *America’s Cold War*, 310.

<sup>48</sup> *Jimmy Carter’s Controversial Nuclear Targeting Directive PD-59 Declassified*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 390 <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb390/> Last accessed 12 January, 2014. See also Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 122-123.

the nuclear war-fighting plan never departed significantly from PD-59.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, as in many Cold War instances, the threat from the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s was overblown, and Reagan's depiction of the growing military strength of the Soviet Union used to attack Carter in the 1980 election was, according to Raymond Garthoff an 'exaggerated picture.'<sup>50</sup> The Soviet Union was in the midst of an economic downturn; over the 1970s the annual increase in national output had declined, leading to economic stagnation and eventually to economic crisis by the mid-1980s.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, despite effectively doubling the Pentagon's budget in his first term, Reagan did not significantly alter the strategic balance. In fact, Fitzgerald has argued that by 1984, the US had fallen slightly behind in strategic weapons as a number of older Titan missiles had been retired and not yet replaced by the troubled MX.<sup>52</sup> However, this was to a certain extent immaterial because people felt as though the US was stronger. As Idaho Republican Senator Steve Symms responded when asked about the military balance 'just Ronald Reagan's election made us stronger...It's a state of mind.'<sup>53</sup> This is supported by contemporary polling which showed that in 1982, a majority of those surveyed believed the United States to be militarily inferior to the Soviet Union, while by 1986 a majority believed that the United States was superior again.<sup>54</sup>

The previous sections have outlined the differences between the meanings for trust as used by President Nixon and President Reagan, and illustrated how the different personal, social, political and international contexts within which the word 'trust' was used influenced the range of meanings it was possible for it to have. Talking about trust in this way requires an acceptance of the limitations of definition and the inability to acquire a 'true' or somehow deeper significance for the word 'trust' than that which lies on the surface of language. It demands an acknowledgement of where our study should stop before we bump our head on the limits of our understanding of language.<sup>55</sup> However, this

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<sup>49</sup> On entering office, Reagan requested (and was granted) an increase of \$32.6 billion in the defence budget on top of the 26.4 billion by which Carter had increased the defence budget in the previous year. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 33. See also Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War* (London: Verso, 1986).

<sup>50</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 1119.

<sup>51</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 33-42

<sup>52</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 235.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Helga Haftendorn, 'Towards a Reconstruction of American Strength,' in Haftendorn and Schissler, eds., *The Reagan Administration*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 119.

does not mean that there is no way to talk about international politics in terms of trust. It is, in fact, this very type of acknowledgement, and the questions that ensue that can transform the idea of the study of trust into a different and more self-reflexive exercise. The following section will examine this potential further.

### **Alternative ways to talk about trust**

The previous section of the chapter illustrated, through an investigation of the differing ways in which context influenced the meaning of trust in the two historical narratives, how the Wittgensteinian challenge of meaning as use can provide useful descriptions of the meanings for trust in different political contexts. Therefore, organising research around the premise that trust has an essence or core of meaning, may not always be the most helpful approach.

Indeed, the popular conception of a role for trust in international politics (as exhibited in the literature described in Chapter 1) becomes suspect as it is founded on the assumption of an essence for trust. If trust is not an inner force that enables or constrains actions with universal characteristics or at least a constant baseline of meanings that can be defined, understood and thereby operationalised, then the idea that it ‘plays a role’ in a generalisable sense in international politics is not necessarily a constructive way to talk about it. This is not to say that there may not be overlapping characteristics and similarities across many different meanings for trust, but that premising study on the idea that *all cases* of trust share the same meaning risks ignoring the specifics of meaning that could actually contribute to our understanding.

However, it is perhaps possible to rehabilitate this notion of a role for trust by changing the way we talk about it. If one changes the meaning of this question to incorporate many roles (by which I mean the many ways on which the word ‘trust’ can be used) for multiple trusts (that have no necessary or sufficient core of meaning) one can reconceptualise the idea of the role of trust from an inner motivating force for action, to instead become part of the action itself.<sup>56</sup> This is a move away from the problematic idea

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<sup>56</sup> This is inspired by C. Wright Mills’ idea of motivation as social action and his removal of the inner motive idea with its false inner motive versus outer justification dichotomy. C. Wright Mills, ‘Situating Actions and Vocabularies of Motive,’ *American Sociological Review*, 5, no. 6 (1940): 904-913. Space

of trust as having agency that is implicit in the literature and towards the acceptance of the importance of intent and the singular study that was advocated in Chapter 1. Allowing for a plurality of meanings and uses for trust that are dependent on the intent of the research and what questions one asks about trust opens up many new opportunities for learning. This involves a process of recognising the possibilities of various descriptions rather than discovering a deep, true explanation.<sup>57</sup> Abandoning the idea of unearthing new and correct understandings of trust allows for multiple descriptions of trust that can serve several purposes and invites a methodological pluralism.<sup>58</sup>

In true Wittgensteinian fashion, this is perhaps best explained by using examples. The following paragraphs show, through a series of possible ways of describing trust in these specific contexts, how various interconnecting and overlapping ways of talking about the roles for trust in the examples under study in this research can be a valuable source of new description.

#### *Example A - Trust and authority/power*

One potential area for further study that has already become clear in the course of the research is the idea of the use of trust as a claim to authority and the relationship between expressions of trust, authority and power in politics. In the chapter on Nixon, trust was a very obvious request for authority based on his privileges as president. This can be further seen in the *Second Annual Report to Congress on United States Foreign Policy*, a comprehensive written account of the overall strategy and philosophy of his foreign policy planning for the year that Nixon began sending to Congress in 1970.<sup>59</sup> In the introductory

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constraints prevent a further discussion of Mills' approach to motivation here however this is a way of thinking that is complementary to a Wittgensteinian approach to meaning and is a potentially valuable course for further research in International Relations.

<sup>57</sup> As McGinn explains, Wittgenstein's point for promoting the label of description rather than explanation is to 'resist the temptation to dig to dig deeper than the phenomena allow' and thereby maintaining a distinction between philosophy as an activity and the methods of the sciences. McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> The opportunity that the Wittgensteinian challenge allows for methodological pluralism has also been proposed in literary theory and criticism by Susan B. Brill, *Wittgenstein and Critical Theory* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> For an account of the development of this report see Kissinger, *White House Years*.

letter sent to Congress with the report, Nixon described the dynamics of trust within the relationship between the executive and the public in the following manner:

It is always a requirement of American leadership to explain, as clearly as possible, its overall approach. We must convincingly demonstrate the relationship between our specific actions and our basic purposes. In turn, the leadership can ask the American people for some degree of trust, and for acknowledgment of the complexities of foreign policy. This does not mean a moratorium on criticism. It means listening to, the rationale for specific actions and distinguishing attacks on the broad policy itself from attacks on tactical judgments.<sup>60</sup>

The message here is that the public must allow that their leadership simply know better than they on certain respects of foreign policy. While Nixon acknowledged an obligation to explain his decisions to the people, (for ‘American leadership’ in this case is arguably synonymous with ‘President Nixon’) it is with the caveat of ‘as clearly as possible’ within the ‘complexities of foreign policy.’ This is the claim that ‘you’ve elected me now you need to trust me,’ which is in spirit somewhat comparable to a ‘you break it, you buy it’ argument. So, while wider administration policy is open for critique, Nixon’s ‘tactical judgements’ should not be attacked.<sup>61</sup> This description of trust shows it as an expression of what Arthur Schlesinger describes as the Nixon administration doctrine ‘that institutions of authority were entitled to respect per se, whether or not they had done anything to earn respect.’<sup>62</sup>

There is a grammatical relationship between ideas of trust, authority and presidential power here that could be the basis for further study with regard to political leadership. Labelling someone as untrusting or untrustworthy is a powerful move in a realm where trust is spoken of as a valuable attribute or resource. For example, in his book on presidential power, Richard Neustadt described Nixon as ‘remarkably inept about a key aspect of power and that the most concrete of all, whom to trust.’<sup>63</sup> Thinking about trust in this manner could provide new descriptions of presidential uses of and claims to power in various political landscapes over a wider historical time span.

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Nixon, Second Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy, 25 February, 1971, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3324>. Last accessed 14 December, 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Though making a distinction between policy and the judgements that formed this policy is somewhat misleading. It is also typically Nixon to conceive of criticism of policy as ‘attacks’.

<sup>62</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1974), 410.

<sup>63</sup> Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 213-214.

*Example B - Trust as part of a ritual/performance of nuclear arms control*

*Mr. President, by reducing arms, we reverse a half-century of steadily growing strategic arsenals. But more than that, we take a significant step forward in dispelling a half-century of mistrust. By building trust, we pave a path to peace.*

*-President George H. W. Bush on signing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in Moscow 1991 <sup>64</sup>*

*President William Jefferson Clinton of the United States of America and President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation met today in New York and agreed on a Strategic Stability Cooperation Initiative as a constructive basis for strengthening trust between the two sides and for further development of agreed measures to enhance strategic stability and to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and missile technologies worldwide.*

*-Joint Statement on the Strategic Stability Cooperation Initiative between the United States of America and Russian Federation 2000 <sup>65</sup>*

*I think it's interesting to note that a new relationship based upon trust and cooperation is one that doesn't need endless hours of arms control discussions...I think we need to have a new strategic framework that reflects the new relationship, based upon trust and cooperation.*

*-President George W. Bush answering a question regarding withdrawal from the ABM Treaty at a press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin <sup>66</sup>*

*[T]he relationships and trust that are built from the new START Treaty spill over into a whole host of other national security issues that are of vital importance to America.*

*-President Barack Obama on the New START Treaty in 2010 <sup>67</sup>*

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<sup>64</sup> Remarks by President Gorbachev and President Bush at the Signing Ceremony for the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks Treaty in Moscow, 31 July, 1991, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19853>. Last accessed 11 January, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Joint Statement: Strategic Stability Cooperation Initiative between the United States of America and Russian Federation, 6 September, 2000, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1392>. Last accessed 11 January, 2014.

<sup>66</sup> George W. Bush, The President's News Conference with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, 13 November, 2001, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=64429>. Last accessed 11 January, 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Barack Obama, Remarks Following a Meeting with Former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and an Exchange with Reporters, 1 December, 2010, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88761>. Last accessed 11 January, 2014.

The statements above from the US presidents who have served since President Reagan all refer to a connection between trust and nuclear arms control. These are but a few examples of the common rhetoric on trust and nuclear arms control that continues to promote the idea that the two are naturally linked. Reagan's slogan of 'trust but verify' is still being used by politicians across the political spectrum, from the hawkish former US Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton speaking on Iran, to President Obama's description of his approach to Russian President Vladimir Putin's plans to remove chemical weapons from Syria.<sup>68</sup>

However, it is a great irony that despite all the public espousal of the importance of trust and trust building in international politics, during the periods under examination in this thesis no one seemed to want to ever admit to actually trusting anyone.<sup>69</sup> While claiming that trust was vital and that building trust was imperative, political leaders also often talked about trust in relation to weakness and naiveté and so denied ever actually being trusting.

This denial of trust is a recurring theme of the two periods investigated in the previous chapters. Both presidents at times publicly advocated for a role for trust in the international system.<sup>70</sup> This is also reflected in the text of the ABM treaty which features the 'strengthening of trust between states' as a desired outcome.<sup>71</sup> However, the two presidents, as well as members of their administration and members of Congress, also used

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<sup>68</sup> John Bolton, 'We cannot verify and must not trust Iran's promises on nuclear weapons,' *Guardian*, 15 October, 2013; 'Dealing with Putin: "Trust, but Verify,"' *Chicago Tribune*, 12 September, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> This can be extended to the whole of the Cold War period during which no politician wanted to make themselves vulnerable to the accusation that they were in any way soft on communism or unprepared to face the Soviet Union. This is also part of why the context of presidential and congressional elections were important to foreign policy and why a second term president could perhaps feel more secure in terms of accommodating the Soviet Union as discussed earlier. See Craig and Logevall, *America's Cold War* for a further discussion of this.

<sup>70</sup> While Nixon did not make much use of trust in the superpower relationship as was shown in Chapter 2, he did on occasion speak of the idea of the importance of trust between states in international politics in general, for example reporting on his 1969 trip to Europe he stated: 'When there is trust between men who are leaders of nations, there is a better chance to settle differences than when there is not trust.' Richard Nixon, The President's News Conference, 4 March, 1969. [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2444](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2444) He also declared to the UNGA that peace 'requires other exchanges, not only of words but of deeds, that can gradually weave a fabric of mutual trust among the nations and the peoples of the world.' Richard Nixon, Address before the 24th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 18 September, 1969, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2236>. Last accessed 14 December, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> *Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti Ballistic Missile Systems*, <http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/abm/abm2.html> Last accessed 14 December, 2013.



trust as a form of censure. This is clearly evident in the many Congressional hearings regarding arms control and missile defence in the two eras. In hearings in 1970, Marshall D. Shulman, Director of the Russia Institute, Columbia University testified that arms control 'is not a question of trust' but 'whether enough responsible men on each side can be brought to recognize and act upon their own rational self interest.'<sup>72</sup> Kissinger, in a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the SALT agreements, pointed out that the agreements were made 'not on the basis of trust, but on the basis of the enlightened self-interests of both sides.'<sup>73</sup> Nixon also reiterated this point in his *Fourth Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy*.<sup>74</sup>

While Reagan publicly advocated for trust between the two superpowers, he also firmly denied that any agreements he made with the Soviet Union were ever based on trust.<sup>75</sup> He also used the word 'trust' as a denunciation of his opponents, for example stating that '[m]any people believe the answer lies...in reaching arms control agreements. Trust and understanding alone, it is said, will lead to arms control'.<sup>76</sup> Members of Congress also used this charge against each other. For example, in hearings on Soviet compliance with arms control treaties, Congressman William Broomfield (R-MI 18) regretfully stated that 'unfortunately...in Congress we have many people who think we ought to be basing our verification just merely on trust, and I think that is wrong.'<sup>77</sup> In

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<sup>72</sup> *Hearings on ABM MIRV SALT and the Nuclear Arms Race, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate Ninety First Congress, Second Session, (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1970).*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>74</sup> Where he repeated that the SALT Agreements were concluded 'not on the basis of trust, but rather on the enlightened self-interest of both sides.' Richard Nixon, *Fourth Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy*, 3 May, 1973, The American Presidency Project.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3832>. Nixon also publicly rejected the connection of trust and arms control by declaring '[I]et not the United States move down first and then trust to the good will and the good intentions of others who may not have the same attitudes that we have toward building a world of peace'. Richard Nixon, Remarks at the Dedication of the John C. Stennis Naval Technical Training Center, Meridian, Mississippi, 27 April, 1973, The American Presidency Project.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3821>. Last accessed 16 December, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> For example: 'Neither the INF treaty we hope to sign during the upcoming summit nor any other agreement that follows will be built on trust.' Ronald Reagan, Remarks on the Strategic Defense Initiative to Martin Marietta Denver Astronautics Employees in Waterton, Colorado,' 24 November, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33735>. Last Accessed 14 December, 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a White House Briefing for Supporters of the Strategic Defense Initiative, 6 August, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=37709>. Last Accessed 16 December, 2013.

<sup>77</sup> *Soviet Compliance with Arms Control Agreements, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Security and Science of the Committee of Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, One Hundredth Congress, First Session (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 3.*

another congressional hearing on arms control, Congressman Henry Hyde (R-IL 6) described the Democratic Party as putting ‘its trust to a [sic] almost childlike degree in paper, in agreements’.<sup>78</sup>

Arvid Schors has described the history of Cold War nuclear arms control negotiations as ‘a history of the United States government publicly flaunting that it could, should, but above all, would not trust the Soviets under any circumstances.’<sup>79</sup> Allan Krass also describes the ‘credibility ritual’ that anyone with claims to authority on nuclear arms control must undergo. This involved the ‘ritualistic incantation’ that one does not, in any way, trust the Soviets and so ‘serves the purpose of demonstrating that the speaker is not a sentimental disarmer or unwitting dupe of Soviet trickery.’<sup>80</sup> In this way, trust (or its disavowal) played a role in establishing one’s ability to take part in the discourse on nuclear arms. Or in other words, to take part in this elite action you must be trusted not to trust.

The basic paradox of trust of the Reagan and Nixon rhetoric, in which trust is both positive and negative, both aspired to but never acted on, continues today. Today’s actors express a related set of declarations in similar contexts, saying for example that they are not naive enough to base any agreements with Iran on trust. For example, Secretary of State John Kerry recently announced that ‘nothing we do’ in negotiating with Iran would be ‘based on trust’.<sup>81</sup> Even if one takes at face value the statements made by US leaders regarding trust and arms control, they lack consistency and one is still faced with contradictory messages in which trust is alternately necessary for arms control, irrelevant for arms control, or indeed whether trust makes arms control redundant. Perhaps one alternative way to think about how important trust is for arms control is to consider trust as a performance in a similar way to Krass’ discussion of a Cold War credibility ritual. Trust is a necessary public part of the practice of arms control in which the articulation of the need to build trust becomes the end in itself as it establishes a commonly acknowledged good.

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<sup>78</sup> *The Role of Arms Control in US Defense Policy*, Hearings before The Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety Eighth Congress, Second Session (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1984), 35.

<sup>79</sup> Schors, ‘Trust and Mistrust,’ 3.

<sup>80</sup> Allan Krass, *Verification: How Much is Enough?* (Taylor and Francis, 1985) 160, eBook downloaded 15 December, 2013. [http://books.sipri.org/product\\_info?c\\_product\\_id=234#contents](http://books.sipri.org/product_info?c_product_id=234#contents)

<sup>81</sup> ‘Kerry Says Talks With Iran Will Not Be Based on Trust,’ *New York Times*, 3 October, 2013.

Trust in this context can be described as a political language trope that, as Edelman states ‘is considered a primary goal’ and therefore ‘to discuss it, praise it, denounce it or repeat it becomes a real gratification.’<sup>82</sup> It is a code word for a group of people (in this case state leaders and diplomats) to identify themselves and their needs as a valid part of the political process through advocating for something that is generally agreed-upon as a positive thing. The role of trust is therefore one of a ‘label suggested by our dominant cultural values and conceptions’ which is ‘presented to our attention and demands a response.’<sup>83</sup> When a politician invokes trust, as George Orwell has described the repetition of political speech forms, ‘he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church.’<sup>84</sup> Thus Reagan was able to repeatedly extol the need for trust prior to arms control with the Soviet Union, this was generally accepted by the western public and every president since has maintained a similar rhetorical connection.

The noteworthy exception to the link that US presidents since Reagan have all made between nuclear arms control and trust is that of President George W. Bush’s statement quoted above. Bush denied the need for ‘endless hours of arms control discussions’ because of the ‘new relationship based upon trust and cooperation’ that had developed between the United States and Russia.<sup>85</sup> However, Bush was making this declaration exactly one month before the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty against the wishes of Russia, which Russian President Vladimir Putin labelled at the time as ‘a mistake’.<sup>86</sup> Trust is again being used as a symbol of a good thing in international politics and therefore talking about it provides a way of framing any potentially contentious decision as a positive one.

The relationship between arms control and nuclear weapons has always been a complex one and arms control has always been part of a circular relationship with military

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<sup>82</sup> In Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, 125.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 157-8.

<sup>84</sup> In Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Language*, 125.

<sup>85</sup> George W. Bush, The President's News Conference with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, 13 November, 2001, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=64429>. Last Accessed 7 January, 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Terence Neilan, ‘Bush Pulls Out of ABM Treaty; Putin Calls Move a Mistake,’ *New York Times*, 13 December, 2001.

spending in discussions of the development of nuclear technology.<sup>87</sup> In Chapter 2, for example, Nixon's approach to arms control was mainly as a means to facilitate movement on issues such as the Vietnam War or the Middle East and part of the mechanism of a wider strategy of détente.<sup>88</sup> President Reagan also justified his first term military buildup as necessary in order to negotiate 'peace through strength' with the Soviet Union.<sup>89</sup>

Despite this, and as illustrated above, US Presidents continue to talk about nuclear arms control in terms of trust. Both are ideas that have been established through rhetorical practices as standard approved diplomatic goals and as interconnecting justifications for various actions. As Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka have argued, arms control has been 'widely accepted as an obvious universal good' which has produced the establishment of an institutionalised system of NGOs, state agencies and academic programmes that they term the 'nonproliferation complex', and which inhibits alternative conceptions of how to deal with issues of nuclear weapons by maintaining the status quo.<sup>90</sup> The language of trust and trust building that has been connected to this nonproliferation complex as exemplified in the quotes above can be viewed part of a performance of diplomacy through the articulation of a universal good thing that is neither means nor end. Therefore, when state leaders declare that they need trust for arms control, or that arms control will build trust and enable peace, one way to potentially think about the role of trust in this situation is as part of a symbolic performance. Further study of the political use of trust and nuclear arms control would allow for a critical examination of how much public expressions of trust are political goals, means to another end, or a performance to establish the validity of the speaker and their place in the arms control establishment.

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<sup>87</sup> For example, the Nixon White House justified ABM by arguing that it was needed for the successful outcome of the SALT negotiations, which in turn was required to prevent further development of ABM systems. Thus arms control actually enabled advances in weapons such as ABM and MIRV technology. As Tomas Halsted wrote, 'no longer was it the purpose of SALT to forestall the deployment of new and destabilizing weapons systems; in effect it had become one of insuring the deployment, not only of ABM but of MIRV as well, regardless of their shortcomings.' Halsted, 'Lobbying Against the ABM,' 26. This can also be seen in a memorandum for Kissinger from Helmut Sonnenfeldt in December of that year in which he expressed his concern that the Soviet slowdown in missile construction could 'spell major public trouble' for the next round of Congressional Safeguard debate. Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 17 December, 1970, NSC Files Box 879, SALT Talks (Helsinki) Volume XIII Oct 70-Dec 70. Nixon Library.

<sup>88</sup> Also, although Nixon ostensibly supported the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) through ratification in his first term, he gave it only minimal support; see Gavin, 'Nuclear Nixon,' in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*. Also Avner Cohen and William Burr, 'Israel Crosses the Threshold,' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 62, no. 3 (2006): 23-30.

<sup>89</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 549.

<sup>90</sup> Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, 'The Nonproliferation Complex,' *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no.3 (2013): 329.

### *Example C - Trust as an ideology*

Another potential avenue for further research that is illuminated by the grammatical approach to trust in these narratives is to talk about trust as the expression of a political ideology. This can be most clearly seen in Chapter 3 in which President Reagan used a meaning for trust that was closely connected with his conservative ideals. The description of trust as a conservative value is evident in an address he gave in April 1988 to the World Affairs Council of Western Massachusetts where he announced that he had,

come here today to suggest that this notion of trusting the power of human freedom and letting the people do the rest was not just a good basis for our economic policy, it proved a solid foundation for our foreign policy as well. That's what we've given to the people, why we have repeated what they instinctively knew, but what the experts had shied away from saying in public.<sup>91</sup>

Reagan repeatedly linked trust to his conservative political philosophy. 'Trust the people' in economic terms was an expression of Reagan's free market, fiscally conservative policy of cutting government spending, lowering taxes and deregulation while increasing defence spending. Reagan's language of trust was about the greatness of the ordinary American. he framed trust as freedom from the pernicious influence of big government and 'experts' so that he could then frame policies of higher taxes, regulation on private industry and government spending as motivated by a lack of trust in America's potential.

Reagan's grammar of trust included the word 'faith', and the connection between the words 'trust' and 'faith' was illustrative of his characterisation of trust as a bond that was sacred and special to the people of the United States.<sup>92</sup> This specialness was rooted in conservative and Christian values. This demonstrates a deeply ideological meaning for trust and its role can therefore be investigated as part of a wider analysis of Reaganite policy or even more broadly in the rise of US conservatism and the religious political right. As well as the habitual connection that has been made in the literature between trust

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<sup>91</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks to the World Affairs Council of Western Massachusetts in Springfield, 21 April, 1988, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35716>. Last Accessed 10 January, 2014.

<sup>92</sup> A further example: 'In choosing between big government and the American people, I'm old-fashioned. I stand with the men who wrote the glorious Constitution whose 200th birthday we celebrate this week. I put my trust in the people.' Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Annual Meeting of the National Alliance of Business, 14 September, 1987, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34793>. Last accessed 12 January, 2014

and the Cold War or nuclear weapons, one can also make a useful link between trust and US political ideologies because of the nature of the founding myths and the political culture of the United States.

#### *Example D – Trust as rhetorical coercion*

Moving to the realm of international politics, one way of conceiving of a role for trust is as a tool of public coercion of other political actors. The grammatical investigation of President Reagan's use of trust in Chapter 3 has shown how Reagan advocated for trust as a necessary component in international politics, and trustworthiness as a required quality in international actors, in order to place pressure on the Soviet Union to take certain actions. Reagan was able to frame the issue of nuclear arms control as a matter of trust and by doing so force the Soviet Union to amend its actions. This linking together of trust with the issue of arms control was a frame that the United States was able to impose on the arms control process.

This potential role for trust is one that fits well with the more strategic, actor-based studies of language such as Ronald R. Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson's model of 'rhetorical coercion' where the objective of the rhetor is 'through skilful framing, to leave their opponents without access to the rhetorical materials needed to craft a socially sustainable rebuttal' to their framing of a situation.<sup>93</sup> By positioning trust as important, and proposing a politically advantageous meaning for trust, the Reagan administration was able to put the Soviet Union in the position of having to accede to certain requests in order to fit within the accepted idea of what was important in international politics.

In his study on confidence building at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Michael Morgan has described how all the participants used the words trust and confidence 'not as a goal in itself but as a weapon to wage the Cold War by other

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<sup>93</sup> Ronald R. Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, 'Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric,' *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 35 (2007): 36. This idea is problematic however as they argue that coercion, forcing actors to accede to your framing despite not necessarily internalising your arguments, is a more useful way of thinking about the process of rhetorical framing than persuasion, forgetting that the act of persuasion must precede the act of coercion as a wider public must be first persuaded that one's frame is legitimate. In this way they describe the outcome rather than the process of the rhetorical move. However, the model is still a useful starting point for thinking about trust in a more strategic, traditional International Relations approach than that which is taken here.

means.’<sup>94</sup> The Soviets initially used the idea of ‘international confidence’ to persuade the western actors to come to the negotiating table. At the negotiations the United States and Western Europeans emphasised an agenda of free movement, Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and transparency through the language of building trust, with all participants seeing this ‘not as a way of building trust for its own sake, but as a tool to advance their own interests.’<sup>95</sup> In this type of situation and especially if one is taking a very intent-focused approach to rhetoric, the description of trust as ‘rhetorical coercion’ is another potentially useful way of talking about a role for trust in International Relations.

#### *Example E – Trust and technology in the thermonuclear revolution*

Another possible way to talk about a role for trust is to look at how trust, technology and verification are related to the nuclear revolution, specifically how the mutual vulnerability that came with the development of nuclear weapons led to different ways of talking about the rhetorical relationship between trust and technology in US politics.

The relationship between the rhetoric of trust and the nuclear revolution in the previous chapters was bound up with language regarding the benefits of technology and technological progress. The plans for ABM in the Nixon era, SDI in the Reagan era and the development of technological means of verification for arms control treaties were quests to make trust unnecessary; to liberate the public from the feeling that they had to trust in deterrence, in an adversary or in an arms control agreement. Technology would replace trust. In testimony before Congress, Nixon administration officials continually affirmed that National Technical Means (NTM) of verification would enable both countries to use satellite imagery and telemetry to verify the SALT I agreement, negating any need for trust. For example, in his testimony to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Kissinger stated that the NTM provided ‘the highest degree of confidence’,<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Michael Cotey Morgan, ‘Trust and Transparency at the CSCE, 1969-1975,’ unpublished paper presented at the “*Trust, but Verify*” *Confidence and Distrust from Détente to the End of the Cold War Conference*, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars & German Historical Institute, Washington DC, 7-9 November, 2011, 4.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>96</sup> *Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Ninety Second Congress on Executive L, 92D, 2D Session. The Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Antiballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) and The Interim Agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on certain*

that any violation would be detected and that administration officials ‘are not basing this agreement on trust, and we believe that this agreement can be verified; and secondly, that it has adequate safeguards to prevent its being violated.’<sup>97</sup>

Reagan also looked to American technology as a means of removing the United States from its state of vulnerability and any requirement to put its trust in the Soviet Union. As he declared, ‘[w]e can either bet on American technology to keep us safe or on Soviet promises, and each has its own track record. And I’ll bet on American technology any day.’<sup>98</sup> Though what is noteworthy here is that Reagan conceived of technology in terms of the potential of the American people to innovate, rather than in terms of technological expertise, of which he proclaimed himself suspicious. Reagan used the word ‘trust’ in terms of technology with regard to his language of ‘trust the people’. For example, in a speech in Madrid in May 1985 regarding public criticism of SDI he declared: ‘If we put our trust in experts and rely on their knowledge to shape our destiny, then we condemn ourselves to live in the past. For how can they be experts in what hasn’t been invented yet, what doesn’t yet exist?’<sup>99</sup> Reagan thus spoke about technology in a specific way that contained both a strong political ideology and a central contradiction that one should trust in the power of American technology while not trusting in technical experts.

Of course, all these technologies were limited and none failsafe. There was, and indeed is, no technological solution to the problem of nuclear vulnerability, but what is significant is that they were presented to the public as such, and as solutions to the unfortunate and unprecedented need for trust in international politics because of the condition of mutual vulnerability imposed by the thermo-nuclear revolution.<sup>100</sup> ‘Trust’ and ‘technology’ were words that were intimately bound up in the national political rhetoric on

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*measures with respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (Interim Agreement), including an associated protocol signed in Moscow on May 26 1972 and S.J. Res 241 and S.J. Res 242, (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1972), 406.*

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 413

<sup>98</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Senate Campaign Rally for Christopher S. Bond in Springfield, Missouri, 23 October, 1986, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36640>. Last accessed 29 December, 2013.

<sup>99</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks to Community Leaders in Madrid, Spain, 7 May, 1985, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38598>. Last accessed 12 January, 2014

<sup>100</sup> Gerard Smith also described verification as ‘more a political than a technical judgement.’ Smith, *Cold Dawn*, 17.



nuclear weapons throughout the Cold War and that could provide scholars with another direction for further study.<sup>101</sup>

What these few, and certainly not exhaustive set of examples show is that it is perhaps possible to say that trust ‘is important’ or ‘plays a role’ in a certain respect but just not in the specific, universalist and limiting way in which the literature to date has talked of it. The description of the role of trust in all the above situations rests on a foundation of meaning as use and an acknowledgement of context and history. By taking this approach there are many roles for multiple meanings of trust in the study of international politics and each of these provides a potentially valuable course of study that is not reliant on reductionist accounts of the meaning of trust but rather takes the approach of ‘*look and see*’.

## Conclusion

The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 often claims that trust not only plays a role in international politics, but that it is both possible and useful to define, understand and operationalise trust and trust building in the study of International Relations. Earlier sections of this thesis have challenged how the representational view of meaning inherent in the form of this research on trust creates problems for the accomplishment of its stated goals. This project has thus far contended that it can be counterproductive to try and separate the meaning of trust from its expression and thereby work under the assumption that it is beneficial or even possible to look at trust as a phenomenon that exists and acts in the world independently and that can be understood in abstract. It has adopted the Wittgensteinian perspective on meaning that argues against such essentialism as well as dismissing the idea of understanding as an experience or attribute rather than an activity.

This chapter has further demonstrated how the Wittgensteinian challenge to the dominant way of talking about meaning proposed in Chapter 1 can provide an alternative

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<sup>101</sup> The importance of the link between technology and the Cold War is one that has been previously studied especially in respect to SDI see for example Harak, ‘One Nation, under God’; Rachel L. Holloway, ‘The Strategic Defense Initiative and the Technological Sublime,’ in Medhurst et al, eds., *Critical Reflections on the Cold War*. Bryan C. Taylor maintains that the rhetorical implications of nuclear weapons have been understudied to date and proposes a course of study of what he has termed as a ‘nuclear rhetorical democracy’. Bryan C. Taylor, ‘“The Means to Match Their Hatred”: Nuclear Weapons, Rhetorical Democracy, and Presidential Discourse,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2007): 667–692.

to the current course of the study of trust in International Relations. It has shown, through a comparison of the various contexts within which Presidents Nixon and Reagan talked about trust, that taking a meaning for trust that is derived from its use is a practical and constructive way of dealing with the word. The chapter examined the disparities in the meanings for trust as used by Nixon and Reagan and illustrated how it is possible to develop an understanding for trust that is located within the context of its use. It showed how the meaning for trust in Chapters 2 and 3 can be understood within the differing domestic, bureaucratic and international circumstances, as well as within the political histories and attributes of the two speakers. It thus provided an ostensive argument for why one should try to understand the meaning of trust in use, rather than imposing one's generalised and a-historical definition for trust onto the situation.

The chapter united the conceptual challenge of the Wittgensteinian approach to meaning that was contained in Chapter 1, with the empirical challenge of the grammatical investigations of trust in Chapters 2 and 3. Through this, it contested several of the conventions of trust research on a practical level and suggested multiple alternative ways to talk about trust. These were taken from the situation under study and founded on an acceptance of context and complexity, thus avoiding the semantic and methodological difficulties of the existing approaches to the study of trust in International Relations. The conclusion will discuss further how the lessons learned from this study of trust can be relevant for the study of International Relations more generally.

## Conclusion

On 1 October 1946, at the dawn of the Cold War and eight months after sending the now infamous *Long Telegram* to the State Department in Washington DC while posted as Chargé d’Affaires in Moscow, George Kennan gave a talk to staff at the Yale Institute of International Studies.<sup>1</sup> The talk bore the title “*Trust*” as a Factor in International Relations and he justified his choice of topic with the following words:

And I have chosen a subject which may seem at first glance too elementary, too vulgar in the political sense, for so initiated a gathering. But I think you will agree with me that in any discipline of the social sciences...there is no postulate, however elementary, which is not useful to re-examine from time to time; and the more obvious and the more familiar the postulate, the greater the danger that we may by inadvertence come to place too great a reliance upon it and commit in this way perhaps the most pardonable but also the most grievous of the sins of scholars.<sup>2</sup>

During his talk, Kennan outlined the limitations of the role of the individual in diplomacy, whom he argued must be ‘pretty well ruled out’ as an object of trust in International Relations, because a diplomat must be a representative of the government ‘and nothing more when he is doing government business.’ He claimed that this was particularly true in the case of the Soviet Union where ‘the interplay of ideology and tradition has led to a state of affairs where almost no confidence is placed in the natural good will or integrity of any individual’. Therefore any examination of trust in International Relations, and specifically any analysis of trust in relations with the Soviet Union, must be at the level of

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<sup>1</sup> Kennan’s analysis of the post-War Soviet outlook in the Long Telegram, later published in *Foreign Affairs* as ‘The Sources of Soviet Conduct’ became one of the most important and influential documents of the Cold War, providing a basis for much US policy to the Soviet Union over the following decades including NSC-68. George Kennan, [X] ‘The Sources of Soviet Conduct,’ *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947). <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/23331/x/the-sources-of-soviet-conduct> Last accessed 3 March, 2014. For further discussion see John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Wilson D. Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy 1947-1950* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25-28.

<sup>2</sup> George Kennan, “*Trust*” as a Factor in International Relations, Rockefeller Archive Center, Rockefeller Foundation records, projects, RG 1.1, series 200.S, box 417, folder 4948. <http://www.rockefeller100.org/items/show/4971> Last accessed 3 March, 2014.

government, the ‘great fabrics of habit and tradition in which the personalities of individuals emerge for relatively brief periods of time, like skeins in the weave, only to disappear again in the mass to which they have added their tiny quantity of substance.’<sup>3</sup>

He further conjectured that, as this was the case, there was no way to ‘properly speak of any such thing as “trust” in the relations between great states’, for to place trust in a government attributed to it ‘a moral quality which it does not and can not[sic] have.’ Therefore, he concluded, saying that one has trust in another state was ‘a misuse of the term. We have knowledge; we have expectancy, perhaps. We don’t have trust.’

Kennan’s pronouncements on the ideology and foreign policy of the Soviet Union and the post-War possibilities for relations between the two superpowers that made up the rest of the address are well known from their publication in other forms. However, his reflections on trust and International Relations in this talk also still have purchase today.<sup>4</sup> In fact Kennan, at the start of the Cold War, identified the issues that scholars who study trust in International Relations are still trying to address in the present: at what level can we talk about trust in international politics, how would trust in the personal relations of diplomats and leaders relate to wider state relations, does trust have a moral dimension or is it based around knowledge and rationality, and is there a correct way in how one should understand and use the term?

Moreover, in his characterisation of the ‘most pardonable but also the most grievous of the sins of scholars’, that of placing ‘too great a reliance’ on a familiar postulate such as trust without adequate consideration, Kennan’s talk presages some of the concerns of this research, work which is being conducted on the other side of the Cold War, almost seventy years and many volumes of scholarship later. In this thesis I have embraced Kennan’s assertion that it is ‘useful to re-examine from time to time’ an ‘obvious’ and ‘familiar’ postulate such as ‘trust’, and so I have undertaken a re-examination of the meaning of the word ‘trust’ and its place in International Relations. In this conclusion, I will evaluate the main points that emerged from this investigation and

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<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note the similar description for the time-bounded role of the individual diplomat in the continuous whole of state government as ‘skeins in the weave’ to that of Wittgenstein’s discussion of ‘family resemblances’ as overlapping threads of characteristics across a continuous grammar of a word.

<sup>4</sup> He also presages Reagan’s idea of America as an inherently trusting nation saying that ‘this thought of a bid for confidence [with the Soviet Union] is one so congenial to the American mind, so powerful in its appeal to the Rotarian heart that beats to one degree or another in every American breast.’

assess what these findings imply for how we talk about trust, as well as how we talk about International Relations more broadly.

### **The grammatical investigation**

The contribution of this thesis has been to challenge the prevailing method of talking about trust and International Relations. The thesis as a whole makes the claim that the existing literature is based on a problematic assumption that one can find the meaning for trust and thereby understand and operationalise its role in international politics. This project suggests that, alternatively, it is in grammar, the place of the word 'trust' in the form of life that is our language, where one can find a meaning for trust. Trust's 'nature' therefore lies in what we talk about when we talk about trust. Looking for a deeper meaning than this is simply a refusal to acknowledge where the boundaries of understanding are located and is the source of several difficulties this thesis has identified in the current form of the study of trust in International Relations.

I began to make this claim by reviewing the literature on trust, both in International Relations and more widely in the social sciences. I argued that on the whole, the literature takes a particular view of meaning as representation and that this particular way of talking about language and meaning, though not the only way to talk about these matters, has been adopted by the authors reviewed without question. While not necessarily explicitly stating this, all discuss trust as if it were an object in the world that has stable and universal characteristics represented by the label 'trust'. I argued that it is this specific way of conceiving of meaning that leads to the dominant picture of trust as playing a role in international politics.

I then claimed that this adoption of the representational view of meaning influences the nature of the subsequent research from its core and leads to certain methodological inevitabilities. These include the consequently necessary search for the 'true' meaning for trust and the need for a complete definition. When this proves difficult, the literature often resorts to what I have termed as three descriptive fallacies to help explain the nature of trust. This thesis has claimed that the difficulties of explanation in the study of trust as presently conducted stem from that first unacknowledged decision on

where the meaning of a word resides, and that opening up a discussion on this would be a valuable contribution to the current literature.

As an opening step in this discussion, I proposed a way of talking about meaning in the case of trust that was not predicated on language as representation. This is the Wittgensteinian challenge of ‘meaning as use’, that words get their meaning from their context and that understanding is not a body of knowledge or an experience but an activity. The purpose of this was not to suggest an alternative Wittgensteinian theory of meaning in International Relations. The function of the Wittgensteinian critique is rather to unsettle the dominant viewpoint, to dislodge some of the assumptions in the literature and to place some uncertainties into the discussion. I suggested that one way to practice an alternative study of trust was through a grammatical investigation that would involve a method of description based on the ethos of *‘look and see’*. This investigation could provide a means of release from the imperatives for definition and abstract meaning that are imposed on the current research. By staying on the surface of language and looking at how meaning is located within a range of possibilities for a word in use, I maintained that a grammatical investigation of trust would avoid the requirement for definition by providing a context-bound understanding of the word.

To illustrate this, I conducted two investigations into meaning as use in the language of trust regarding nuclear weapons as expressed by two US Cold War presidents. Rather than being guided by any previous idea of what trust was or what trust did in either of these cases, I took a Wittgensteinian approach of *‘look and see’* and described meanings for trust that were located within their specific background. The investigation of President Nixon’s use of trust in the debate over ABM in the context of the SALT negotiations and President Reagan’s use regarding his nuclear weapons policy and the arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union, demonstrated two meanings for trust whose foundations were located in different circumstances.

In a time of social unrest and widespread discontent with authority, Nixon referred back to a long-standing tradition of trust in the office of the president, locating himself in a long line of venerated past leaders such as Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower. He also used his position as president to draw a distinction between the qualities of his judgement on foreign policy issues such as the ABM and the judgement of the ordinary American citizen, and based an appeal for trust

on that difference. Nixon's meaning for trust was thus a reflection of the political context and his response to the imperatives of the nuclear revolution.

Although President Reagan often based his rhetoric around themes of nostalgia, he did not talk about trust in terms of the history of the office of president, but rather spoke of trust with reference to a vision of America built on the principles of freedom and limited government. Reagan related trust to democracy, faith and free-market principles and, as such, spoke of it as an innately American characteristic, which was shaped by his place in US political culture, the contemporary politics and his vision of politics in a nuclear era. Unlike Nixon, Reagan also placed trust prominently within his public speech on the Soviet Union and nuclear arms control. He talked about the international realm as a place where trust was important and framed the Soviet Union as an inherently untrustworthy partner in nuclear arms control.

The grammatical approach to these subjects allowed for a comparison between the two meanings that highlighted the significance of use to meaning when talking about a word such as 'trust'. Contrasting the two uses of trust described in the historical chapters showed how, in both these stories, meaning was located within and inseparable from a wider background of understanding. Through a discussion of the similarities and differences of the personal, bureaucratic, domestic and international situations in which the president's uses of trust were situated, the thesis illustrated how meaning is affected by context and is thus perhaps best understood in its place. I concluded with some brief suggestions taken from insights gained in the two chapters as to how the study of trust in these particular examples could proceed in a manner that is more in line with a non-representational approach to understanding.

### **Implications for the study of trust**

One of the principal conclusions and contributions of this research is the claim that the idea of uncovering trust's nature and the role it can play in international politics is actually a particular picture of the world. While this picture may be a useful one in the conduct of specific research agendas, it is also inevitably limiting, for as William Connolly explains, '[t]hose who simply use established concepts to get to the facts of political life, those who act unreflectively within the confines of established concepts, actually have the

perceptions and modes of conduct available to them limited in subtle and undetected ways.’<sup>5</sup> This work contends that the lack of acknowledgement in the existing literature on trust of the limiting power of this picture is important and has led to what John Gunnell describes as ‘internal contradictions and self-generated dilemmas’, such as the problematic tendencies and the three descriptive fallacies associated with the representational account of trust that I outlined in Chapter 1.<sup>6</sup>

In practice, if one accepts this picture and takes the view held within the existing literature that trust needs to be defined on an abstract level, there are two possible variations of compromise to accept in order to deal with the ambiguity of meaning: one must either define trust very loosely or in very specific terms. Each of those two compromises has its own problems in terms of an actual contribution to the study of international politics. If one creates a very broad, general definition for one’s specific purpose, one runs the risk of being able to make everything and anything in politics fit into a narrative of trust, thus explaining little. In contrast, if one takes a very specific definition of trust, one is likely to be left with the proposition that ‘according to my definition of trust as ‘x’ in specific circumstances ‘y’ this is an occasion of trust’. This circular explanation may be technically accurate but once again has a problem with how much it can actually contribute to furthering an understanding of politics.

This work therefore recommends an alternative way of talking about trust that might avoid some of the most common dilemmas. By challenging the current form of trust research on both a conceptual level and through the grammatical investigations contained in the historical chapters, this research has exposed the frame of the picture of the world contained in the dominant methods of conducting research on trust in the social sciences. The thesis thus advocates dislodging the dominant methods, or at least dislodging the assumptions upon which the methods are built. It also argues that breaking down this picture of trust in International Relations can create new possibilities for further research

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<sup>5</sup> William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 1.

<sup>6</sup> John Gunnell, ‘Desperately Seeking Wittgenstein,’ *European Journal of Political Theory* 3, no. 1 (2004): 77-98.



and enable a methodological plurality that allows the nature and circumstance of the enquiry to decide its means.<sup>7</sup>

Another contribution that emerges from this research is a caution that one should be critical of what one is doing by choosing trust as a priority for study. Just as we should question the politicians who claim the need for trust in international politics, we should also ask what the implications are of privileging trust in the study of International Relations. Chapter 3 demonstrated how the Reagan administration created a narrative of the importance of trust in international politics to advocate for specific political goals regarding nuclear weapons. If it is clear how imposing a narrative of trust onto politics can shape perspective in practice, imposing a similar narrative onto the study of politics also influences research agendas. Taking a call for trust or an acknowledgement of its importance from a political setting, in a political speech or document for example, and bringing it into an academic setting runs the risk of reproducing an existing political agenda or bias.<sup>8</sup>

There are limitations in what one can see if one is framing international politics in terms of trust, so that trust becomes, as Wittgenstein describes ‘like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at’ and we are left with the problem that it ‘never occurs to us to take them off.’<sup>9</sup> Also, if the enterprise of studying trust in International Relations is focused on whose explanation of trust is most correct, it becomes a possibility that in conducting the study of trust in International Relations, one learns more about differing authors’ competing theories of trust than about international politics.

When trust becomes embedded in the form of our questions, it places a boundary around the world of potential answers. And, if all stories, as Michael J. Shapiro claims ‘have a mythic level’ in that they ‘have a job to do, a perspective to promote, a kind of world to affirm or deny’, it is important to stop and question what the story of trust in

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<sup>7</sup> This is congruent with the Wittgensteinian idea of philosophy as therapy, ‘[t]here is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies [emphasis in original].’ *Philosophical Investigations*, 133.

<sup>8</sup> This issue of transferring the biases of sources is discussed with regards to the study of history in Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta Books, 1997), 80.

<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 103.

International Relations is doing as a necessary beginning to any research on the subject.<sup>10</sup> Talking about politics in terms of trust necessarily privileges certain concepts and actions that are related to the grammar of trust and undermines those that are not.

One response to the challenge of ‘meaning as use’ could be that, separate from its expression, there was a deeper role for trust in these Cold War encounters. However, this is still placing a false distinction between words and meaning that does not allow the Wittgensteinian point. As Wittgenstein explains, ‘[y]ou say: the point isn’t the word, but its meaning, and you think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though also different from the word. Here the word, there the meaning.’<sup>11</sup> This work has argued that we cannot get behind our words to some real thing underneath and, in fact, trying to get beneath what we talk about when we talk about trust to some ‘true’ or more real meaning will only cause confusion. However, this does not mean that meaning is arbitrary. On the contrary, meaning is located in a background of understanding and based in certain material conditions, the ‘scaffolding of facts’ upon which we play our language games.<sup>12</sup> Meaning in use does not mean that meaning is random and acknowledging complexity is not admitting that the world cannot be understood; it simply questions what it means to understand.

Of course the grammatical approach in this research is not without its own problems and questions. Firstly, there is the question of what can or should be considered as context in any context-bound description. The Wittgensteinian suggestion of ‘look and see’ is not a systematised approach, and this work is by nature qualitative, interpretive and personal, and must rely on the judgement of the individual scholar.

Secondly, and linked to this is that the Wittgensteinian suggestion of description over explanation and the approach of ‘look and see’ may raise questions when bringing the idea into practice in an analysis of politics. It invites the critique that taking a Wittgensteinian approach does not allow for certain types of theory or any wider understanding beyond the singular. However, as argued in Chapter 1, the Wittgensteinian use of description is more nuanced than this criticism would allow. What description means is also a function of its particular language game. As Wittgenstein states, ‘[p]erhaps

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<sup>10</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, Introduction, in Michael J. Shapiro, ed., *Language and Politics*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 120.

<sup>12</sup> Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 330. Quoted in Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, 229.

this word “describe” tricks us here. I say “I describe my state of mind” and “I describe my room”. You need to call to mind the differences between the language games.’<sup>13</sup> Just as there is not one meaning for trust, the question to ask is not ‘what is describing?’ but ‘what is meant (or for this purpose intended) by description here?’ Descriptions can take many forms; they are ‘instruments for particular uses.’<sup>14</sup> What this points to is that ‘look and see’ allows for openness to a multiplicity of methods and theories (as was shown in practice in Chapter 4). While the Wittgensteinian approach is not compatible with International Relations when framed as a social science that conducts covering law-style theory, it is not inherently anti-theory if theory can be thought of as a way of describing the world. Theory as description simply requires the appropriate choice of descriptive instrument that entails the judgement of the author and must originate in the nature of the specific issue that is under investigation.

In fact, this is not dissimilar to some other more conventional work on theory and International Relations. In an article that addresses a similar subject from a different perspective, Adam R.C. Humphreys has argued for the ‘heuristic application’ of theories in International Relations.<sup>15</sup> Humphreys asks how explanatory theories are applied in International Relations and claims that rather than providing covering-law type explanations, theories ‘indicate what sort of explanation is required, provide conceptual categories and suggest an empirical focus.’<sup>16</sup> He concludes that theories must be looked at in an empirical context and that their use cannot be separated from the ‘good judgement’ of the scholar.

While Humphreys adopts a more traditional social scientific approach to the idea of theories, explanation and International Relations to the Wittgensteinian one taken here, they are nonetheless sympathetic claims. Humphreys places his emphasis on the contextual and the importance of the personal experience and judgement of the scholar in a manner that is similar to the contextual approach of ‘look and see’. He also advocates for scepticism of abstract explanations and the place of the historical and the specific case. This is not incompatible with the description of theory as a ‘picture’ of seeing the world.

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<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 290.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>15</sup> Adam R.C. Humphreys, ‘The heuristic application of explanatory theories in International Relations,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 2 (2010): 257-277.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 258

Finally, it is obvious that the frame of trust also shapes this work which, although a critical one, is nonetheless a study of trust in International Relations. Despite this boundary, this study still constitutes a more flexible and self-reflexive approach to the topic of trust than that of the existing literature. By keeping on the rough ground of the everyday use of words, this study of trust, while framed by a word and of course limited by that frame, is nonetheless able to take the limits of the word from the subject under study rather than imposing limits onto the subject from above. Reforming the commonly asked question from ‘what does trust mean?’ to the more grammatical, ‘what is meant by trust here?’ provides new and different answers and understandings while remaining within the framework of trust and International Relations.

### **The wider contribution to the study of International Relations**

The recognition of a Wittgensteinian approach to language can also contribute to the study of International Relations beyond the literature on trust. It can add to our understanding of other grand concepts and categories in International Relations as well as provide a way to question the assumptions that go into the general form of our research questions. As James Tully explains, the *Philosophical Investigations* is a ‘vehicle for [Wittgenstein’s] profound aim of unsettling and resisting the most basic conventions of thought of our scientific civilization’.<sup>17</sup> This research therefore contributes to the wider study of International Relations in exposing certain dominant conventions, or ‘pictures’ of the world and how we talk about it in both theory and practice.

Moving the focus away from whether trust existed or acted within the historical chapters also makes a contribution to the literature on these two historical eras and on the process of nuclear arms control, US foreign policy and political communication. The analysis of President Nixon’s meaning for trust exposes Nixon’s approach to foreign policy and to governance more broadly, as well as the administration’s methods of political communication. Framing the narrative of the battle for ABM deployment in this way also effectively highlighted the connection between nuclear weapons programmes and domestic politics. By critically examining President Reagan’s meaning for trust,

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<sup>17</sup> James Tully, ‘Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy: Understanding Practices of Critical Reflection,’ *Political Theory* 17 no. 2 (1989): 197.

Chapter 3 was able to describe his use of language in the international realm, to query the idea of a role for trust in the process of nuclear arms control in the late 1980s and again to illustrate the connection between nuclear weapons policy and domestic politics. Indeed, another contribution of this work is to highlight the significance of domestic politics in all the decision-making on nuclear weapons throughout these periods. The approach of ‘meaning as use’ also allows the possibility of questioning the traditional way of discussing motivation as an inner source of action in the study of Cold War History and I believe that this is a potentially fruitful avenue for further research.

While this work has focused on the study of trust in International Relations, many of the same points apply to how we talk about other words such as ‘fear’, ‘power’, ‘liberty’ or ‘legitimacy’. All of these terms share the potential danger of hypostatisation, which can lead to misplaced contests over meaning overshadowing the potential usefulness of the study of the word. There have been Wittgensteinian inspired interventions into debates on the meaning of other words in International Relations. Shane Mulligan has conducted a conceptual history of the use of the word ‘legitimacy’ in international affairs through an incorporation of Wittgenstein’s idea of language games to understand the continuity and change in the use of legitimacy in the study and practice of international politics.<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Havercroft uses Wittgenstein’s discussion of changing aspects to argue that political philosophers should not try to gain an explanation of the word ‘liberty’, but should instead view liberty as an ‘aspectival concept’.<sup>19</sup> Véronique Pin-Fat has also undertaken a grammatical reading of the expression of universality in influential literature on ethics and International Relations.<sup>20</sup> This review of trust adds to the existing literature advocating for the recognition of Wittgenstein in debates over meaning and International Relations by focusing on the dilemmas of definition and explanation that are relevant to much of the existing work on these words.

This research also offers a contribution to a wider discussion about how we talk about International Relations and the idea of thinking conceptually more broadly. Taking a Wittgensteinian perspective to theory provides a language through which one can question what a theory is and does, it illuminates theory’s role in creating pictures of the world, and

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<sup>18</sup> Shane P. Mulligan, ‘The Uses of Legitimacy in International Relations,’ *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 34, no. 2 (2006): 349-375.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Havercroft, ‘On Seeing Liberty As,’ in Cressida Heyes, ed., *The Grammar of Politics*.

<sup>20</sup> Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*.

by thinking of it in this manner, exposes its effects on our thinking. The importance of this for broader study can be seen in the resonance of these themes in recent and differing works on theory's place in International Relations. For example, Chapter 1 discussed the connection between the recent practice turn in International Relations and Wittgensteinian descriptions of language as a form of life. The approach taken here has much in common with this literature in terms of advocating for a wider approach to understanding and knowledge than what has typically been allowed.<sup>21</sup> I have also shown that the Wittgensteinian approach is not incompatible with Humphreys' work regarding the heuristic application of International Relations theory.

In his 2012 book, Daniel Levine argues that prevalent in all existing approaches to International Relations theory is an underestimation of the extent 'to which the limitations of theory come into play in understanding political realities'.<sup>22</sup> He contends that the 'essentially complex, interconnected, "lumpy" quality of real-world things' eludes the limitations of social science which often then falls prey to the general danger of reification in thinking about politics.<sup>23</sup> He advocates the confrontation and acknowledgement of the inherent limitations of conceptual thought. While Levine's Frankfurt School foundation significantly differs from the Wittgensteinian basis of this work, there are several similarities and overlapping points in both intent and in conclusions.

Both Levine's work and this research recommend a continuous process of self-critique and reflection as well as the recognition of the limits of our ways of understanding the world in abstract terms. Both argue for an acceptance of the excesses of theory and categorisation, and the distorting effect of what Levine describes as reification and what I have labelled as hypostatisation.<sup>24</sup> Levine's 'sustainable critique' and the Wittgensteinian

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<sup>21</sup> On an anecdotal note, during the course of this research, former US or Soviet diplomats I have met at conferences or other events have also spoken of trust in terms of the importance of knowing how to act, the unconscious rhythms and often unspoken rituals of diplomacy, all of which fits well with a practice-based approach to the topic.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel J. Levine, *Recovering International Relations: The Promise of Sustainable Critique* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> I have used hypostatisation as opposed to reification for two purposes. Firstly, the word reification is used so much that it is in itself in danger of becoming a member of those categories of words that inhibit rather than stimulate thought when used, a concept that is referred to often without consideration. Hypostatisation, purely by being a slightly more uncommon term invites more thought in the reader. However, the main reason is that I believe that hypostatisation is a more appropriate term to describe the process by which scholars give meaning to trust as it suggests a physical presence and substance that I think is appropriate when reading common discussions of trust that implicitly bestow it with both presence and agency.

analysis through the grammatical ‘look and see’ investigation offered here also do not result in the proposal of any one method or theory and neither see any particular school or paradigm of thought as more or less susceptible or immune to the dangers of forgetting the impact of conceptual limitations on International Relations scholarship. In this manner they are both works about the importance of remembering.

The Wittgensteinian critique in this project has something to say to all these differing approaches. A main contribution of this thesis is to promote the consideration of language within the general literature on the conduct of study in International Relations regarding the limitations of conceptual thought and the importance of history and judgement. This work has claimed that, in order to address these concerns, it is necessary to begin a point that is often prior to that at which most debates begin and that is with our words. Bringing Wittgenstein into the debate provides a reminder of how many of the issues of International Relations theorising are located in how we talk about our discipline and the world and this has its origin in how we conceive of the meaning of words.<sup>25</sup>

This thesis has argued that the pictures of the world that shape much of the International Relations literature are pervasive because they are located in our language: ‘A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably [emphasis in original].’<sup>26</sup> Wittgenstein tells us that the picture is intractable because by talking in the same way we have no choice but to repeat it to each other. This research has claimed that if one dismantles the idea of discovering a true meaning for words, then many conceptual problems in the existing literature cease to exist, but to do so it might be necessary to talk in a different manner. To attempt to think differently using the same words is not easy, proposing a change of thought without a change of language may not be the most effective means of avoiding the typical traps such as that of reification as identified by Levine.

We therefore need to start asking question about the assumptions that underlie our language. Before beginning to ask any questions about the world and how we understand it, we should question the assumptions about meaning and understanding that are in the

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<sup>25</sup> See Fierke, ‘Wittgenstein and International Relations,’ in Cerwyn Moore and Chris Ferrands, eds., *International Relations Theory and Philosophy*. Also Charlotte Epstein, ‘Constructivism or the eternal return of universals in International Relations. Why returning to language is vital to prolonging the owl's flight,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 499-519.

<sup>26</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 115.

form of the questions that we ask and the words that we use. I have attempted to do this in two main ways in this work. Firstly, by not asking a specific research question about trust in the two historical chapters, but instead by being guided by the idea of ‘look and see’ and a grammatical search for the possibilities of trust. And secondly, by choosing to change the language in which I talk about trust.

This thesis has thus been an exercise in trying to avoid the usual language of description of trust. I have tried to evade the typical hypostatisation of the term, not by adopting a different method but by adopting a different set of words to describe trust. I have not only avoided statements about trust ‘doing things’ or ‘acting,’ but have also abstained from talking about ‘the concept of trust’ or the ‘idea of trust’ separate from an individual’s conception of the word. In doing so I have attempted to change what can be meant when one says that trust ‘plays a role’ in international politics.

I have also refused the use of verbs such as discover, unearth, find, uncover or others that would suggest digging down below the surface of language for a hidden, true meaning for trust, and I have only reluctantly used the phrase ‘the study of trust’ with reference to the literature because alternative formulations suffered from a distracting long-windedness. I have done this to try to avoid perpetuating a way of talking about the world that repeats and reinforces the dominant patterns of understanding and explanation. This has actually not been an easy task (and doubtless has not been totally successful), and the ease with which I have often reverted to these terms without thinking underlines the stickiness of the common way of speaking about words and ideas in social science, the dominant pictures that lie in our language and reinforce our ways of thinking. It is the importance of the acknowledgement of this ‘bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language’ that has been at the centre of this work.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 109.





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